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THE

MYSTERIOUS SEAL,

A ROMANCE.

THE

MYSTERIOUS SEAL,

A

ROMANCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By W. C. PROBY.

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1799.

THE

MYSTERIOUS SEAL;

A

ROMANCE.

CHAP. I.

LOUD and ſucceſſive peals of thunder reverberated amongſt the hills, vivid and repeated flaſhes of lightning illumined the ſurrounding gloom, but only to render returning darkneſs more horrible and terrific; the wind howled with tremendous guſt, and ruſhing with accumulated force through the opening of every valley, with difficulty the af-

frighted traveller preſerved the equilibrium of his motion. The rain at length deſcended, and falling in ceaſeleſs torrents, every low built cottage within the circuit of the ſtorm was threatened with deſtruction from its complicated operation. Such were the fearful horrors of the night, when the youthful and blooming Conrad bent his weary way fatigued and benighted, unknowing whither his ſteps tended, or where any friendly roof was to be found that might afford him ſhelter from the " pelting of the pitileſs ſtorm," that might ſerve to reſt his wearied limbs, and recruit his exhauſted ſpirits. The ſtorm increaſed, the cold became intenſe, the violence of repeated guſts frequently threatened the affrighted Conrad with deſtruction, by forcing him into the river, which rolled impetuouſly at his

his ſide, and now began to overflow its banks, and inundate the ſurrounding country. At length perceiving a light at ſome diſtance, he became cheered, and reanimated by the ſight; and with all the force of remaining ſtrength he ran towards the ſpot. Breathleſs and wearied he arrived, but, vain deluſion, cruel diſappointment! he found only the ruins of a ſmall building, which appeared to have been fired by the lightning, and though the continued torrents of rain had deſtroyed the aſcent of the flame, it yet remained half unextinguiſhed, and caſt a vivid glowing light to ſome diſtance around.

The unfortunate Conrad now became a prey to deſpair: the ſtorm yet continued with unabating violence, and he anxiouſly and fearfully looked around for ſome friendly habitation where his life

might be preſerved, for he felt the tide of exiſtence ebb in his palpitating frame, and hardly dared to hope for another return of that pure pleaſure he had frequently experienced in contemplating the riſe of the glorious orb of day, and the cheerfulneſs diffuſed throughout nature, by its vivifying rays — a cheerfulneſs, which rendered the murky darkneſs around him more gloomy, and more horrible by the contraſt — a cheerfulneſs, impreſſed by a benevolent Deity upon the work of his hands, and imperiouſly calling upon man to repay the benefit by gratitude and joy, and not by gloom and diſcontent. To that Deity, by an inſtantaneous effort of mind, he offered up a prayer for ſafety and protection. His mind thus abſtracted for a moment from the ſcene before him, on returning to its contemplation became leſs diſturbed,

diſturbed, and looked forward to futurity with cheerful hope. Another light beamed upon his eyes: afraid of a ſimilar deception, he anxiouſly looked towards the place where he had perceived it, which appeared to be at a conſiderable diſtance, but could not diſcover from whence it proceeded. His determination was inſtant; for his only alternative was to run towards it, and endeavour to find ſhelter from the ſtorm, or remain expoſed to all its fury, which threatened him with deſtruction. He endeavoured to haſten to the ſpot, but fatigue and perturbation added to the want of food had exhauſted him, and he could only walk ſlowly to the place from whence he had caught the glimpſe. Some trees intervening for a moment intercepted his ſight, and terror again overwhelmed him. Once more it met his

eyes, and again he collected all his ſtrength, and endeavoured to reach it by the ſhorteſt way the darkneſs of the night would permit him to chooſe; at length with palpitating heart, and tottering frame, he arrived within a ſhort diſtance of the ſpot, and a momentary flaſh of lightning exhibited a cottage to his view. The cheering ſight thrilled him with joyful emotion, contending ſenſations agitated his nerves; and ſcarcely could his tottering limbs bear him to the door.

Colin, the inhabitant of the cottage, his wife Annette, and their daughter the lovely Matilda, had retired to reſt early the preceding evening, but the violence of the ſtorm frightened and alarmed the beauteous Matilda, who tremblingly aroſe, and ſcarce knowing what ſhe did, went into the chamber where her parents

rents ſlept. Juſt at the moment, the united noiſe of the thunder and wind awakened Colin from a profound ſleep, into which he had fallen. His cottage, though very lately repaired, was ſtill little calculated to reſiſt the fury of the ſtorm, which now impetuouſly roared around it; he wiſely therefore determined to ariſe with his wife and daughter, to deſcend into the lower apartment, and there prepared for the worſt, wait the concluſion of the tempeſt. This determination he communicated to his wife, whom the ſtorm had likewiſe awakened in the greateſt alarm, and they all deſcended together, where obtaining a light, a chearful fire ſoon blazed upon the hearth. Annette and Matilda, in the higheſt degree of alarm at every peal of thunder, and every guſt of wind, that with ſcarcely any

interval repeatedly followed each other, preſſed cloſer and cloſer to their protector Colin, who himſelf affrighted at the danger which threatened their humble habitation, expected every moment that by the deſtruction of his cottage they ſhould be turned out, houſeleſs and forlorn, to experience all the accumulated horrors of miſery and diſtreſs.

It was at this moment that Conrad knocked loudly at the door, a violent guſt of wind at the ſame inſtant ſhook the cottage, and made it perceptibly rock. Annette and Matilda ſtarted and looked at Colin and each other, with wild affright, who himſelf trembled with fear. The roar of the hurricane had prevented the ſound of Conrad's knock from being heard, he again knocked loudly, and in tones of the greateſt diſtreſs, begged for God's

God's ſake they would give him ſhelter. Colin ſtarted at the ſound, and could hardly believe it real, the repetition of the knock and of Conrad's intreaty, uttered in language ſtill more diſtreſsful, convinced him of its truth, he ran to the door, accompanied by his wife and daughter, which was no ſooner opened, than Conrad ſtaggered in quite exhauſted by his exertions. He had no ſooner entered the door, than animation forſaking him, he fainted, and would have fell to the ground, had not Colin caught him in his arms, and bore him to a bench, where ſupporting his lifeleſs frame, the two females endeavoured by their tender attentions to recal the ſuſpended functions of life. The figure of Conrad, pale, and haggard as he was, was ſtill intereſting; above the middle ſize, but not awkwardly tall, his limbs were

ſtraight and well proportioned, and an expreſſion was diffuſed over his countenance, which rendered it pleaſing, even amid the pallid hue of death. The lovely Matilda redoubled her exertions, and aided by thoſe of her mother, they were at laſt ſucceſsful. Conrad opened his eyes, whoſe brilliancy though ſuffuſed in languor, yet animated his countenance, and added to it a conſiderable portion of intereſt. Becoming a little recovered, gratitude dictated his firſt expreſſions. "Thanks, ſaid he, a thouſand thanks for your kindneſs; fatigue, and want of food exhauſted my ſpirits, and rendered me weak and feeble." The mention of want of food ſtruck the ear of the kind hearted Colin, who immediately brought out ſome of thoſe refreſhments his cottage afforded, which though of the coarſeſt ſort, appeared

peared to Conrad the moſt delicate of viands. Having ſatisfied the cravings of appetite, and quenched his thirſt with ſome water, the only beverage the habitation of Colin afforded, he was at leiſure to attend to the family who had ſo kindly adminiſtered to his wants.

Colin and Annette exhibited ordinary figures, though a conſiderable portion of good nature diſplayed itſelf in their countenances. But the form of Matilda arreſted his obſervation: with a peculiar air of ſoftneſs diffuſed over her features, a dignity was viſible in every look, and in all her actions, which ſeemed greatly ſuperior to the ſituation in which ſhe was placed, and created ſurprize in the mind of Conrad, who could not withdraw his eyes from the fair figure that had attracted his notice. Her features were regular,

Beauty ſtamped them for her own, whilſt the attempered brilliancy of her eyes, and the ſmiles which ever and anon played upon her countenance, rendered it irreſiſtibly attractive. Her form was elegant, and grace was in every motion. Conrad gazed with admiration, and wondered with amazement at finding ſo much lovely grace, and dignified elegance in ſo humble an habitation. The attention of Matilda was equally directed towards Conrad. The refreſhment he had partaken of added to the warmth emitted from the fire, that cheerfully blazed before him, invigorating his conſtitution, and animating his ſpirits, he forgot the fatigues he had experienced, and cheerfully joined in converſation with the family. The youthful down was ſtill upon his cheek, but his features diſplayed a manly beauty,

beauty, and an expreſſion which rendered them peculiarly intereſting. Their eyes frequently met in the mutual interchange of obſervation, and the bluſh which then diffuſed itſelf over the lovely face of Matilda, added an intereſt to her charms, and a faſcination to her beauty. The ſtorm had been in ſome meaſure forgotten: novelty, curioſity, and cheerfulneſs, together with the pleaſing ſenſations more particularly experienced by Conrad and Matilda, derived from thoſe glances which each caught the other in the act of directing, had prevented its violence from exciting much fearful attention; though ſometimes the roar of a ſudden guſt would interrupt their converſation, and create an anxiety in their minds, which though unpleaſant, was momentary: and cheerfulneſs ſoon regained its former level.

The

The fury of the ſtorm was now however conſiderably abated, and all felt the want of ſleep. The converſation often interrupted by long pauſes, at length gradually died away, and by common conſent they laid down where they were, and enjoyed a ſhort but refreſhing ſleep.

Conrad was the ſon of a peaſant named Rollo, whoſe diſpoſition was remarkably moroſe, and his manners repulſive and auſtere. His mother he had never known, ſhe dying during his infancy. Rollo earned his daily bread by the ſweat of his brow, and during the intervals of labour, paid ſome attention to the education of his ſon; he poſſeſſed much ſtrength of mind and ſolidity of judgment, and an underſtanding much ſuperior to his ſituation, and which had received a conſiderable ſhare of cultivation. But a ſtern ſeverity, and gloomy

gloomy harſhneſs was continually diſplayed in his conduct, and forced him to live alone, from the diſlike which his manners impreſſed upon his companions in labor. He treated them with a contempt that ſeemed to ſay he thought himſelf far their ſuperior, and they repaid it by continually avoiding his company, and only converſing with him when compelled by neceſſity. His knowledge of mechanics rendered him highly uſeful, and in a great meaſure abſolutely neceſſary, as no other for many miles around equalled him in ſkill. His ſon was his only companion, to his education he continually turned his attention, imparting to him the knowledge he had himſelf acquired, and endeavouring by accuſtoming him to reflect upon every object of nature, and every circunmſtance that paſſed within his

his contracted circle, to fortify and ſtrengthen his judgment, and give a force to an underſtanding naturally good, which might enable him to riſe ſuperior to diſappointment and adverſity, and rely ſolely upon himſelf. Conrad, as he advanced towards manhood, frequently wondered at the talents of his father, contraſted with the humility of his ſituation; a myſtery ſeemed to envelope his conduct, which the former found it impoſſible to penetrate. He was frequently tempted to enquire of his father the reaſon of his conduct, and the cauſe of his ſituation; but the gloomy ſeverity which ſat upon his brow, awed him into ſilence. Often he would reſolve to pry into the myſtery which created his ſurprize, but as often the auſterity of his father's countenance, and the ſevere reſerve of his manner diſconcerted the

reſolution

reſolution he had formed, and the words he intended to utter, died upon his tongue.

At length Rollo was ſeized with illneſs, and with the utmoſt coolneſs and compoſure, ſaw the period of his diſſolution faſt approaching. Calling his ſon, who had nearly attained the age of twenty-one, to the ſide of the bed where he lay emaciated and weak, with difficulty he raiſed himſelf up, and ſpoke as follows, " A myſtery hangs over my " birth which I have never been able to " develope, I am convinced I was not " born in the humble ſtate to which " chance or fate has reduced me, but " from whom I am deſcended, I know " not; my parents, whom I never knew, " deſerted me at an early age, and " I never could gain the leaſt *informa-* " *tion relative to their name, rank, or* " *reſidence.*

" *reſidence.* The perſon with whom I
" reſided at the period of my firſt
" recollection, and from whom I re-
" ceived the little knowledge with which
" *my* mind is ſtored, turned me upon
" the world to gain a ſubſiſtence as I
" could, by my own labour and in-
" duſtry. I had lived with him in
" great harmony, and conſidered him
" as my father, which I imagined he
" really was, until he undeceived me;
" but at the ſame time pleaded com-
" plete ignorance of my parents and
" relatives. When I was about ſixteen
" years of age, he requeſted me to
" accompany him on a journey which
" he was about to take, to this I
" readily agreed, and we travelled on
" foot for ſeveral days with little in-
" termiſſion. At length we ſtopped at
" a houſe not far from this ſpot, where
" we

" we were hoſpitably offered refreſhment,
" and a bed for the night. I was
" much fatigued by our continued tra-
" velling, and ſoon ſunk into a ſound
" ſleep which laſted a conſiderable time.
" When I awoke and enquired for my
" conductor, judge my ſurprize at
" being informed he had quitted the
" houſe ſeveral hours, and no one knew
" whither he had directed his ſteps. En-
" quiry was vain, and ſearch fruitleſs, he
" was not to be found, nor could I pro-
" cure the leaſt information of the route
" he had taken. Behaviour ſo myſterious
" confounded and appalled me. I knew
" not what courſe to purſue, nor how
" to conduct myſelf, and remained for
" a long time entirely abſorbed in re-
" flection; but the longer I reflected,
" the more I was involved in myſtery.
" Happening accidentally to put my
" hand

" hand into my pocket, I felt ſome
" money which had been placed there
" ſince I entered the houſe, and like-
" wiſe a ſeal that I had never before
" ſeen, and which I long contemplated
" with a ſcrutinizing eye, but could not
" draw any concluſion from its exami-
" nation tending to elucidate the myſ-
" tery in which I was involved. This
" is the ſeal," here he took a ſeal from behind his pillow, and preſented it to his ſon, then proceeding, he ſaid, " the
" myſtery attached to this ſeal I have
" not been able to develope, you per-
" haps may be more fortunate, and ſome
" time hence diſcover the ſecret" — His ſtrength now failing him, he ſqueezed the hand of his ſon, convulſively ſtruggled for a minute, and expired.

Conrad reflecting upon the ſtrange relation which had been imparted to him, became

became abſorbed in a profound reverie, and a conſiderable time elapſed before he thought of calling in the neceſſary aſſiſtance, to diſpoſe of the remains of his deceaſed father. Theſe being decently interred, he ſat down ſeriouſly to reflect upon the circumſtances in which he was placed, he attentively examined the ſeal, upon which he perceived an emblematic device to be engraved, but its meaning he was utterly unable to unfold. He could not account for his father's conduct in quietly fixing his reſidence ſo near the ſpot, where he was deſerted by his friend, and never afterwards making an effort to diſcover the myſtery which, he was convinced, muſt be attached to his birth. Perhaps had his father lived a few minutes longer he might have explained his reaſons, perhaps fate had ordained,

he

he ſhould not penetrate it. All was myſtery, a vaſt ocean of conjecture was open to his view, but no friendly beacon appeared to direct his track. At length he determined to quit his native cottage, to journey on where chance might direct him, and endeavour to penetrate the myſtery, which now occupied his mind to the excluſion of every other object. He was proceeding on this expedition, when loſing his way he became benighted, and took ſhelter in the cottage of Colin as before related.

Colin opened his eyes when the ſun was about to begin his daily career, and awakened the reſt, who immediately aroſe and ſaw the glorious luminary ariſe in all its ſplendor. But the cheerfulneſs of the morning was conſiderably abated, by the ſtrongly contraſted deſolation, which appeared every where

where around the effect of the late tremendous ſtorm; trees torn up by the roots lay extended upon the plain, the adjoining river had overflowed its banks and revelled in the adjacent meadows. The carcaſes of ſheep were floating down the impetuous torrent, and numbers of the feathered ſongſters were dead or expiring upon the ground. Matilda caſt a look around, and ſighed; many of her little favourites, many of thoſe who had fed out of her hand, and repaid her with a ſong of gratitude, now lay dead at her feet. A walk into the garden appertaining to their cottage cauſed the heaving of another ſigh in the tender boſom of Matilda: many of the flowers which ſhe had reared with her own hands, which ſhe had watched with tender care, and viewed their opening buds with delight and ſatisfaction, were now extended

extended upon the ground, never more to riſe. The gentle maid walked a little farther, and the lamb ſhe had played with and fed, and which always bounded towards her with gratitude and love, now lay ſtretched out before her, lifeleſs and ſtiff. The tears ſtarted from her eyes and trickled down her cheeks; ſhe was about to aſk with the querulouſneſs of diſtreſs "why is ſuch a deſola-" "tion of the fair face of nature per-" "mitted?" but checked the riſing diſcontent, and ſaid, "It is all for the beſt, " "and it becomes not mortals to com-" "plain." "It is, my ſweet maid, no " "doubt for the beſt," replied Conrad, who had followed her in her walk, "ſuch ſtorms ſeem to be ſalutary criſes " "of nature, without which, would moſt " "probably enſue earthquakes, deſolating " "the earth with tenfold violence." He looked

looked tenderly upon Matilda, the clearneſs and the freſhneſs of the morning heightened her beauty, and improved all her charms, whilſt the ſenſibility diſplayed in her countenance, gave an intereſt to every feature, and the tear ſtarting from her eye, only rendered it more faſcinating. Matilda raiſed her eyes, they met thoſe of Conrad, and ſhe bluſhed. The beauty of the morning which added to her charms, increaſed the captivation of his figure, even now the incipient germ of love appeared, and promiſed a blooming maturity. A call to the breakfaſt table interrupted their converſation, they proceeded towards the cottage, and all ſat down to a homely repaſt.

Colin was a retainer of the haughty Baron de Umfreville, who poſſeſſed here a large eſtate, but it was ſterile and unproductive.

productive. The Baron reſided at a conſiderable diſtance upon an eſtate, which added to a greater extent an unbounded fertility. A large ſhare of the land was allotted to Colin, to cultivate ſuch parts as were likely to repay the labour and expence employed in their cultivation; in return for which, he was only allowed the common neceſſaries of life, and a cottage to defend him and his family from the inclemency of the weather. But poſſeſſing an intellect, ſomewhat ſuperior to the mental faculties of the peaſants around him, who were his companions in agricultural labour, he was employed in the capacity of an overſeer to direct their exertions, and for this an allowance was made him, which rendered his ſituation a little more comfortable than that of his fellows. Guided by the good taſte

of

of Matilda, he had fitted up his cottage in a ſtyle much ſuperior to the common method, the room below was arranged in a very convenient manner for all domeſtic purpoſes, whilſt above, by means of a partition, two neat ſleeping rooms were made, one of which was occupied by Colin and his wife, and the other by Matilda.

Conrad, whilſt at breakfaſt, began to reflect ſeriouſly upon the neceſſity of his quitting the cottage, and purſuing the ſcheme he had formed; but the more he thought about leaving the habitation where he was now entertained, the more diſtreſſing it appeared to him. His father had taught him to reflect upon the operations of his own mind, as well as upon the circumſtances that happened around him; and he muſed deeply upon the repugnance he felt to depart from the

cottage. He began to wonder why he ſhould have reflected at all upon the ſubject, when he ought to have conſidered his departure as a mere matter of courſe, and muſed upon the ſubject till he forgot to eat. Colin, who was not much ſubject to fits of reflection, called out "Why "meaſter, you ſeem to be in the dumps "this morning, what's the matter with "you?" but Conrad heard him not, his mind had taken flight into the regions of reverie, and was abſtracted from the paſſing ſcene, until Colin flapped him upon the ſhoulder, and called out "Coom, coom, eat away, what I "ſuppoſe your ſtomach is n't up to our "homely fare, now you are not ſtarving "with hunger." Conrad rouſed from his reflections by the boiſterous livelineſs of Colin, apologized and again fell too. He ſoon found it was Matilda that engroſſed

engroſſed his imagination, and overpowered his judgment; he reſolved again and again to quit the cottage, and purſue his journey, for the purpoſe of unraveling the myſterious ſecret, in which he appeared to be involved; but her lovely image as often preſented itſelf, and forced him to alter his reſolution. At length, incapable of determining to leave the cottage and Matilda, he reſolved to remain a little while if Colin would permit him, and perhaps chance might aſſiſt his ſcheme there as well as if he continued the journey he had planned, and at all events he could at any time leave the cottage and purſue it, forgetting that the longer he remained, the firmer he would be rivetted to the ſpot. His eyes involuntarily wandered upon Matilda, who appeared to his enraptured ſight ſtill more faſcina-

ting; and rejoicing in the idea of remaining where he was, in ſpite of the dictates of his judgment, every thought of quitting her vaniſhed from his mind. Matilda's thoughts had been likewiſe buſily employed; ſhe took an intereſt in the welfare of the young ſtranger, and called it ſenſibility: the probability of his early departure from the cottage, plunged her into diſquietude, and anxious ſolicitude for his ſtay took poſſeſſion of her mind, for which ſhe could not account. Matilda was now about eighteen, and in a great meaſure uneducated, but had good natural talents and a fine taſte, a little cultivation only was wanting to render her an accompliſhed woman.

Conrad finding it impoſſible to tear himſelf from Matilda, at length ſaid to Colin, "I have conceived a great pre-

"dilection

" dilection for this part of the country, " will you permit me for a ſhort time " to become an inmate in your hoſpi- " table cottage; in return for ſuch kind- " neſs, I will gladly ſhare your agri- " cultural labours, and perhaps may be " an uſeful aſſiſtant." Colin, who much wanted additional aid, gladly accepted the offer. The eyes of Matilda beamed with joy, ſhe felt herſelf relieved from a weight of anxiety, and borne up to the height of vivacity, ſhe could not tell why. It was agreed that Conrad ſhould ſleep in the lower room of the cottage, and a nook was made up for him, where, though he would not ſleep upon down, he might when fatigued obtain a comfortable nap.

Every day now had its employment, and each had its pleaſures; their food was homely, but they feaſted upon con-

tent; their beds were hard, but their ſleep was refreſhing. Conrad became every day more and more unwilling to quit the cottage where he enjoyed happineſs, but not unalloyed: the ſcheme he had formed, the myſtery he wiſhed to develope, frequently obtruded upon his mind, but the intruſion was moſt unpleaſant, it reminded him of what he wiſhed, but had not the reſolution to perform. The varied charms of Matilda fixed him to the ſpot, with adamantine chain, and the thought of leaving her plunged his mind into deſpondency. Frequently would they ſtray together at the dawn of day, contemplating with ſilent admiration, the varied tints of the landſcape that opened to their view, and inhaling the enlivening perfumes aſcending from the flowery carpets at their feet, the glorious luminary

luminary majeſtically aroſe, impreſſing gaiety and ſmiles upon the face of nature, and infuſing cheerfulneſs into every created being. Often at eve would they contemplate its decline, till the laſt red ſtreak was vaniſhed from their ſight, and all was huſhed and ſtill. The fine taſte of Matilda enjoyed the beautiful proſpects of nature, with unceaſing pleaſure; ſhe ſoon diſcovered the great mental powers of Conrad, and aided by a large ſhare of good ſenſe, participated all his ſtores of knowledge and reflection. Her mind gradually expanded, and aſſimilated itſelf to his, an union of ſentiment was a chain too powerful to be broken by any common force. They loved, but the judgment of Conrad ſtruggled, and ineffectually againſt its power, he wiſhed, he ardently wiſhed to develope the myſ-

tery of his descent, but all the courage he could summon to his aid was insufsufficient to enable him to quit the cottage, and his beloved Matilda. To take her with him on a wandering journey was madness, to unite himself with her for life, would prevent him from pursuing what still remained the darling object of his wishes.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

WHILST Conrad remained in this ſtate of perplexity, a meſſenger ſuddenly arrived from the Baron de Umfreville, bearing a command for all his retainers here to depart immediately to the eſtate where the Baron reſided. He had added another manor to the extenſive domains that ſurrounded his caſtle, containing a large portion of land, which though fertile, remained waſte and untilled. This he determined to put into a ſtate of cultivation; and as it

ſeemed likely to repay the labour beſtowed in a more ample manner than the eſtate where Colin reſided, he reſolved to deſert the latter, and confine his attention ſolely to the princely domains, in which his reſidence was ſituate. The meſſenger he ſent was commanded to be the guide of the retainers, until they arrived at the place of their deſtination.

The mandate was abſolute, and they durſt not diſobey it; but though unpoſſeſt of thoſe comforts which endear man to his home, a natural attachment to the place of their birth, which a harſh command now forced them to quit, cauſed the flowing of many a tear, and the heaving of many a ſigh. Matilda poſſeſſed of finer feelings than the reſt, felt a more lively regret at quitting thoſe ſcenes ſhe had ſo often contemplated

plated with complacency and delight, which were endeared to her by habit, and the proſpect of which had frequently conferred upon her the pureſt pleaſure and the calmeſt tranquillity. The flowers ſhe had cultivated, the birds ſhe had fed, all preſented themſelves to her view, and renewed in her tender boſom, the moſt painful ſenſations. Conrad alone felt no pain at the thought of leaving a place, which he had long wiſhed to quit, had not his love for Matilda withheld him. They were now to depart together; there was a chance of meeting with ſome clue to guide him through the labyrinth of myſtery, and he rejoiced rather than lamented at the opportunity that offered of leaving the place, without offering violence to his feelings. But his joy was ſomewhat alloyed by the pain which his beloved

loved Matilda evidently endured at the thought of quitting her native cottage, though her ſorrow was alleviated by the reflection that Conrad was to accompany her.

No alternative remained, they muſt depart. Conrad, that he might have a good plea for his journey to the eſtate of Umfreville, determined to paſs for the ſon of Colin, to which the latter had no objection; and ſorrowful and melancholy the party commenced their journey. The guide rode in front, the females, the old men, and the children were placed in the middle, whilſt the young, and the middle aged, guarded on all ſides. They travelled on with little or no interruption for ſeveral days, when a river which had broken its banks, and inundated the adjacent country, was the firſt impediment they

met

met with in their paſſage. After ſeveral vain attempts to paſs its rapid current, they were forced to wait for two days, when the water a little ſubſided. Boats were procured for the purpoſe of effecting a paſſage, into one of which, Matilda was about to ſtep, when her foot ſlipped, and ſhe fell into the ſtream. Conrad, almoſt frantic with affright, ruſhed into the torrent, regardleſs of danger, and endeavoured to catch the lovely girl in his arms, but the rapidity of the current forced her from his graſp; again he eſſayed and ſucceeded, bearing his lovely burthen in triumph to the bank, where he arrived breathleſs and exhauſted. Matilda had the preſence of mind to endeavour to keep herſelf from ſinking, and when brought to the ſhore was yet ſenſible, the croud gathered around, and ſhe was conveyed to a neighbouring

neighbouring cottage, to which Conrad accompanied her, where every aſſiſtance was rendered that good nature could ſuggeſt. The affrighted father, and ſtill more afflicted mother, ſhowered bleſſings upon the head of her preſerver, and Matilda when recovered, thanked him in terms that ſufficiently betrayed her love; he hung over her enamoured, and in every word and action, evinced the tender affection with which her amiable qualities had inſpired him.

Matilda was ſtill languid, and it was highly proper ſhe ſhould remain for a ſhort time until perfectly recovered; added to this, the river was yet dangerous to paſs; and it was determined for the whole party to ſtay until the morrow, when from the appearance of the water, it would be ſufficiently ſubſided to allow them to paſs in perfect ſafety.

ſafety. Conrad enjoying the beauty of the proſpect which extended itſelf before the cottage, perceived at ſome diſtance a ruinous caſtle. He enquired to whom it belonged, but could not gain the information he deſired, only learning that for a number of years paſt it had been mouldering to decay, and was now nearly in ruins. Curioſity, ſharpened by the deſire of attaining the object he had in view, was conſtantly predominant in his mind, and he inſtantly determined to viſit the ruin. Arriving in a ſhort time at the ſpot, he found the information he had received relative to the ſtate of the caſtle to be ſtrictly true. The moat was filled with rubbiſh, and whilſt the ſhell of the caſtle remained in a great meaſure entire, the paſſages were choaked up with fragments, and many of the apartments ſo ruinous as

to

to render any attempt to explore them highly dangerous. He made an effort to force his way along ſome of the paſſages, and viſit the chambers, but found ſo many dangers environing him, that he was compelled to quit the attempt, and obſerving nothing to gratify curioſity, was about to depart, when walking along the court yard ſomething ſtruck his foot, on looking down he perceived a ſmall picture, which on taking from the ground, proved to be the portrait of an elegant female, who greatly reſembled himſelf. Struck with the reſemblance, he attentively and minutely examined it, and the likeneſs between himſelf and the female, of whom he held the portrait in his hand, appeared ſtill more exact. Wondering at ſuch an incident, he anxiouſly looked around, and again endeavoured

deavoured to explore the caſtle, which perhaps might contain ſome important elucidation of the myſtery in which he was involved; but all his efforts were fruitleſs, and at length he was forced to return, with new cauſe for wonder, and more enveloped in myſterious circumſtances. He pondered for ſome time, whether he ſhould not remain in the neighbourhood of the caſtle for the purpoſe of endeavouring to make diſcoveries, which he fancied might be intereſting to him, and were attached to the manſion he had quitted. But Matilda ſtarted up in his mind, and overpowered every reaſon his judgment could urge in favour of remaining; at length he determined to proceed to the domains of Umfreville, but keeping in his memory the ſituation of the caſtle he juſt departed from, to return to it at ſome future

future period, in caſe he did not meet with the elucidation he ſought in any other place. Arrived at the cottage, he found Matilda much recovered, and upon the morrow being perfectly reſtored to health, the whole party reſumed their journey.

On the ſecond day after they had quitted the river, they drew near to the territories of the Baron de Umfreville. A quarrel had ariſen between him and the Baron de Montacute, a neighbouring chief, equally haughty and unyielding as himſelf; neither deigned to appeal to law for the purpoſe of terminating the diſpute, and each had recourſe to the ſword, as the only means of ſettling their differences. Their retainers were mutually arrayed, and the battle was raging between the contending parties when they arrived. Conrad poſſeſſed a martial

a martial and an enterprising spirit, the sight of the battle animated his mind, and in spite of the tender entreaties of Matilda, he took up a sword just dropped by one of the combatants who had received a mortal wound, and ranged himself under the banner of Arthur, the young Baron de Umfreville, who commanded his father's retainers. The little army commanded by Umfreville was the most numerous, but their opponents led on by the Baron de Montacute in person were courageous, and scorned to retreat, unless absolutely compelled by necessity. Montacute advancing a short distance from his party challenged Umfreville to single combat, the latter indignantly accepted the defiance, and rode forward to meet him. The onset was furious, the helmet of Umfreville was cleft by a single stroke of his

his adverſary's ſword, wielded with a ſtrong and mighty arm; he endeavoured to return the blow, but was inferior to Montacute in ſtrength and ſkill. The latter preſſed forward upon the half conquered Umfreville, his ſword was better tempered and more powerful, and forcibly bringing it into contact with his adverſary's, that of Arthur was broken, and himſelf immediately unhorſed; Montacute advancing at the ſame time upon the retainers of Umfreville, and commanding his troop to follow. The former diſheartened at the fall of their leader, were already preparing for flight, when Conrad who had ſeized a horſe, from which a wounded cavalier was compelled to alight, forcibly advanced againſt the victorious Montacute, and before the latter was fully aware of the approach of an adverſary, he

he ſtruck him from his horſe. The retainers of Montacute were now in their turn diſpirited. For Umfreville at this moment aroſe from the ground, and on foot, led his party furiouſly to the attack. Montacute aroſe from the duſt, and was driven with his retainers, before the victorious Umfreville. Three times the brave chieftain endeavoured to rally his diſpirited ſoldiers, but the fate of the day was decided, and as often he was defeated, and at length compelled ignominiouſly to retreat. Conrad remained engaged in the action until the laſt purſuit was cloſed, and then retired from the field, contented with the part he had performed. Arthur de Umfreville had viewed with admiration the bravery and preſence of mind diſplayed by Conrad; and eagerly enquired to whom he was indebted

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The Baron, previouſly to t
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erection of ſome mud hovels for their reception. He conſidered them as a race of beings, wholly unworthy the notice of ſo exalted a character as himſelf, and was only induced to iſſue ſuch an order, that their time, which he wiſhed to appropriate ſolely to the cultivation of his land, might not be employed in any concern of their own. A habitation ſomewhat better than the reſt was appropriated to Colin, who ſtill continued an overſeer of their labour, and there he, with Annette, Matilda, and Conrad, immediately took up their reſidence.

The Baron de Umfreville was a man ſenſual and vicious, haughty, and unfeeling, the moſt diſguſting arrogance marked his character, and ſwayed his conduct. Unpoſſeſt of the leaſt particle of feeling for the diſtreſs of others, he looked only to the gratification of his

paſſions, and cared for nothing but the means of ſatisfying the cravings of appetite. Yet poliſhed in his manners, and capable of aſſuming the exterior of virtue, and the language of kindneſs and benevolence whenever it ſuited the purpoſes he wiſhed to effectuate, and of concealing the moſt wicked intentions under the impoſing garb of beneficence and politeneſs; he was at once an unprincipled ſenſualiſt, and a conſummate hypocrite. But the remembrance of paſt crimes and misfortunes would often intrude in ſpite of the continued round of pleaſure, in which he was continually involved, and their frequent return rendered him at times gloomy and ſuſpicious, brutal, and ferocious.

His ſiſter, the Lady Roſalind, had married a young knight, whoſe family, tho' reſpectable, could not boaſt the noble blood which

which ran in the veins of the Umfrevilles. His ſituation being far beneath them, her father not only poſitively refuſed his conſent to the marriage, but forbid him the caſtle, and ſtrictly enjoined her to think no more of a man, ſo unworthy of being put in competition with the dignity of his houſe. Roſalind promiſed obedience, but ſoon found an opportunity of eloping, and becoming irrevocably united to her lover. Her father, and his ſon the preſent Baron, were in the higheſt degree exaſperated, at an act which they thought degraded their dignity, and diſgraced their houſe, and neither would ſee her after the marriage. Her huſband having a ſmall eſtate in the neighbourhood of the haughty caſtle of Umfreville, they took up their reſidence there, in hopes of being able, at a future time, to ſoften the obdurate

heart of the Baron, and inherit a ſmall portion of his enormous wealth. A hope well founded, as the Baron, her father, was a man of literature, in the conſtant exerciſe of numerous virtues, and who had been remarkably fond of his daughter; but his good qualities were clouded by the moſt haughty pride, which was frequently diſplayed in his conduct, and now influenced him to ſpurn the ſubmiſſive ſupplications of his daughter, and reject her with diſdain; it therefore might be imagined with a conſiderable ſhare of probability, that the benevolence and good ſenſe, which were known to actuate his mind in deſpite of his diſguſting haughtineſs, would ſoon predominate, and returning fondneſs hail them to the paternal manſion. But alas, this hope was only formed to be diſappointed, her father died not long

long after the marriage, without making the leaſt proviſion for her, though juſt before his death ſhe was delivered of a ſon. The preſent Baron ſtill exaſperated at what he called the diſgraceful marriage of his ſiſter, threatened her, and her huſband, with the effects of his vengeance. Roſalind, actuated by too high a ſpirit ſubmiſſively to crouch to her brother, laught at his menaces, and ſet them at defiance. The Baron became ſoon after reconciled, and invited them in a friendly manner to his manſion, they accepted the invitation, and went to the caſtle with their infant ſon, but from thence never returned. The Baron reported they had left the country, but univerſal ſuſpicion pointed at him as their murderer, though his vaſt power effectually prevented any enquiry from taking place. But, though able

to ſtifle enquiry, he could not rid himſelf of the terrors that frequently haunted him, he ſeldom could remain long alone, and ſometimes amid the hilarity of a feaſt, or the voluptuouſneſs of ſenſuality, was ſeized with a ſudden fright, followed by an univerſal tremor, a cold ſweat and every ſymptom of a perturbed mind, and frequently when he happened to be by himſelf, would ſuddenly riſe from his ſeat, and pace the room with quick and agitated ſtep, looking on this ſide, and on that, with the moſt fearful anxiety, until overwhelmed by terror, he was forced to go in ſearch of company, that might relieve his mind in ſome meaſure from the weight that oppreſſed it. An unfortunate event had likewiſe occurred, the recollection of which added conſiderably to his unhappineſs, this was, the loſs of his daughter,

who

who in early infancy was unaccountably ſtolen, and had not ſince been heard of; of this daughter, his wife, whom he had married late in life, died in childbed.

Arthur inherited all his father's vices, and his father's hypocriſy, and was indeed the very counterpart of his parent. Little affection appeared between them, but Arthur, afraid of the effects which might reſult from his father's anger, conſtantly abſtained from interfering with the gratification of his vices; and from the extenſive means reſorted to by the Baron, to enſure that gratification, the ſon enjoyed a reputation for virtue, which actually appeared in his conduct, but which only reſulted from a want of opportunity for the commiſſion of vice. To relieve the tedium ariſing from the abſence of employment, and unpoſſeſſed of any taſte for

literature, he had recourſe to mechanics, in the practice of which he ſecretly and frequently laboured to paſs away ſome portion of the time that hung heavy upon his hands, and became a proficient in moſt of its branches.

The manſion which formed the reſidence of the Baron de Umfreville, had been partly pulled down and rebuilt by his father, according to the dictates of a ſingular taſte, and again much altered by the preſent inhabitant. That part known by the name of the Weſt Tower, was reported to be haunted, ſtrange noiſes were ſaid to have been heard, and even apparitions ſeen. It was however wholly uninhabited, and ſedulouſly cloſed againſt all viſitors, nor was it ever entered by the Baron, or any of his houſehold. The Eaſt Tower was appropriated to his pleaſures, and inacceſſible to all but himſelf.

ſelf. In the remaining part the Baron and his houſehold reſided; and there he left the lower apartments entirely to his retainers, except the library, which was conſtantly open, whilſt himſelf reſided wholly in the firſt ſtory, in a ſuite of magnificent apartments, fitted up under his own immediate inſpection.

The retainers newly arrived upon the Baron's domains, commenced their labours under the inſpection of Colin, whilſt Conrad took a ſhare in the work, and lived as uſual with the family, but ſtill impatient concerning the myſtery which he ardently wiſhed to unravel, he could form no plan by means of which a diſcovery might enſue, and the only remaining alternative was to truſt to chance. Thus day after day paſſed on in the ſame beaten track; whilſt

his love for Matilda increaſed, and an union with the lovely maid was the anchor on which he reſted his expectation of happineſs. But anxious to diſcover the myſtery that oppreſſed him, he could not bear the thought of giving up the purſuit, and though enraptured with Matilda's charms, marriage would have fettered his exertions, and prevented him from taking thoſe ſteps, which, unincumbered, an anxious curioſity might lead him to take. Still however he could not reſolve to leave her, and the continual conteſts that enſued in his mind between anxious curioſity and love, ſubtracted from his happineſs, whilſt they kept him in a ſtate of conſtant perplexity and ſuſpenſe, but gave riſe to no determination.

Jaques, who was the valet of the Baron, was likewiſe a pander to his vices, and found

found it a very difficult task to procure new, and pleasing objects, for the gratification of the vicious passions of him, whose fickle and capricious temper required a change almost in the very moment of enjoyment. A numerous seraglio rendered him still more fastidious, and the task imposed upon Jaques had become an insupportable burden. He thought he might perhaps find some object worthy of regard in this point of view, amongst the retainers lately arrived, and for this purpose directed his steps towards the newly cultivated ground, where he visited every hovel belonging to them, but found no female in the least capable of pleasing the capricious passions of his master. He was departing in despair, determined to quit a service become intolerable to him, and retire to some dis-

tant country, when he recollected he had not viſited the habitation of Colin, thither he immediately repaired, and too ſurely obſerved the beauteous Matilda; her fine form and lovely features, immediately preſented themſelves to his mind, as the means of reconciling him to the Baron, who had began to be diſpleaſed with what he called his neglect. She was a prize which might probably make his fortune, and releaſe him for the remainder of his life, from the afflictions of ſervitude. He ſat down and entered into converſation, whilſt Annette invited him to partake of ſome refreſhment; he thanked her, and it was handed to him by Matilda, little thinking ſhe was adminiſtering hoſpitality to the man, who was about to betray her innocence, and barter her virtue. Colin and Conrad were abſent,

ſent, and Jaques without interruption converſed with Matilda and her mother. "This ſeemeth, fair damſel," ſaid he, "but an uncomfortable ſituation for "you and your mother to reſide in. "I think it is in my power to pro- "cure you a better habitation." "We "ſhould be greatly obliged to you," ſaid the unſuſpecting Annette, "we are not "very comfortable here, to be ſure, "though we have been forced to be "content, for want of a better habita- "tion, but I'm ſure as how, we ſhould "be glad to find a better cottage to "live in." "Not a doubt of it," ſaid Jaques, "and it ſeemeth to me that "your huſband, as an overſeer, and one "of the chief retainers of our gracious "Lord the Baron, ought to have apart- "ments appropriated for him in the caſ- "tle." "La ſir," ſaid Annette, "you

"joke,

" joke, ſuch humble folk as us are not fit " to live in the caſtle." " I think," ſaid Matilda, " as we are perfectly content in " our preſent reſidence, we cannot be more " happy, in the moſt ſplendid palace " upon earth; and therefore the change " would not be ſo much for our advan- " tage." "It ſeemeth to me, fair damſel," replied Jaques, "you are miſtaken, you " would aſſuredly be better content with " ſnug comfortable apartments in the " caſtle, than with this mud built hovel, " that ſcarcely keeps itſelf up againſt " the driving of the ſtorm; but more " of this another time, I will for the " preſent take my leave, in a few days " your cottage ſhall again contain me, and " you will perhaps accept the offer which " has only your good in view." With this reply, he departed, leaving Annette and Matilda ſurprized at the intereſt he

ſeemed

ſeemed to take in their welfare. As yet they were ignorant of his character and moſt deteſtable office; they only knew him as the valet and confident of the Baron.

Colin and Conrad, upon returning to the cottage, were made acquainted with what had paſſed, and Colin leapt for joy at the thought of becoming an inmate of the caſtle, and partaking of good cheer, to which at preſent he was a ſtranger. Veniſon paſties, ſtrong humming ale, and clouted cream, filled his imagination, and left no void for any other ſenſation. Conrad rejoiced too at the change; for every variety in his ſituation afforded him a ſubject for joy: the diſcovery, which he thought himſelf deſtined to make, continually preſented itſelf to his mind, and at every alteration wrought by chance in the chequered ſcene of his exiſtence,

exiſtence, hope clung faſt to his mind, and flattered him he muſt aſſuredly attain the object of his ſearch; but ſtill the invitation cauſed ſome ſlight ſuſpicious fear to ariſe in his breaſt: he feared ſhe might become the prey of a titled ſeducer, to whom her beauty would be a powerful temptation; he feared ſome fortunate rival might deprive him for ever of her affections, and render him miſerable and forlorn, deprived of the only object upon which he founded his hopes of happineſs. A thouſand fears agitated his boſom; a thouſand anxieties crouded thick into his mind; he wiſhed they might remain where they were, but the myſterious circumſtances relating to himſelf ruſhed upon his recollection. He could not hope to develope them by remaining ſtationary in a hovel, labouring day after day in the ſame beaten track; it

it was only by becoming an actor in a variety of situations, he could have a chance in his favour of making any discovery. Thus vibrating in resolution, he still remained in suspense, and was driven forward by passing circumstances.

Jaques no sooner was summoned to the Baron, for the purpose of assisting him in dressing, than he began—"Good "my Lord, I have seen a damsel this "morning, who seemeth to me worthy "of your Lordship's attention."—— "What! I suppose," replied the Baron, "one of those ordinary creatures you "have been lately in the habit of in- "troducing to me; but I will no longer "silently suffer your neglect and in- "attention; the dungeons below are "ready for the reception of those of my "household who neglect their duty, do "you hear?"—"Good my Lord, let "me

" me intreat your Lordſhip to ſuſpend
" your anger for a moment: The dam-
" ſel I allude to is framed by the beauti-
" fulleſt mechaniſm of nature; the roſes
" and the lilies are continually conteſt-
" ing which ſhall enjoy the ſuperiority
" in her countenance; her features are
" regularly proportioned to each other,
" and are ſingly formed according to
" the line and rule of beauty; her eyes
" ſparkle as the diamond; her lips are
" as coral; and her teeth, in even rows,
" appear like newly-poliſhed ivory; her
" form is delicate and well proportioned.
" In ſhort, my Lord, ſhe is a perfect
" beauty." The quaint deſcription given by Jaques inflamed the imagination of the Baron. " If," ſaid he, " ſhe is all that you
" aſſert, and you betray her to my arms,
" your reward ſhall be ample, it ſhall be
" every thing you can wiſh for."——

" Thanks,

" Thanks, my good Lord, a thouſand " thanks for your kindneſs;—but a " thought ſtrikes me, your Lordſhip " ſhall ſee her yourſelf; I can eaſily in- " troduce you in diſguiſe into the cot- " tage of Colin as a brother domeſtic of " your houſhold."—" Let it be ſo," replied the Baron; " I will diſguiſe myſelf, " and we will depart immediately."—— " Stay, my good Lord; permit your " ſervant to ſay a word: Only a ſhort " time has paſſed ſince I was at the " cottage; if I return again ſo quickly, " it will appear ſtrange, and they will " peradventure have ſome ſuſpicion."— " True, Jaques; I had forgotten that " circumſtance: it ſhall be to-morrow " morning."——" I will attend your " Lordſhip to the reſidence of the fair " damſel whenever I receive your Lord- " ſhip's command for that purpoſe."

Jaques

Jaques ſubmiſſively quitted his haughty maſter, and immediately ran to Margaret, a fellow ſervant, for whom he had long entertained an affection. "My dear "Margaret," uttered the joyful Jaques, "let us congratulate ourſelves; my for-"tune is made for ever!"—"How, "in the name of wonder, is that?" replied Margaret, ſurprized. Jaques was confounded: he was about to play a villainous part; he was about to become the betrayer of innocence and virtue to the vileſt of purpoſes; and he was aſhamed to avow the act. His joy at the proſpect of becoming free from the trammels of a ſervitude he deteſted had overbalanced his judgment. He now only ſaid, in return to the queſtion of Margaret, "In conſideration of my "faithful and long-continued ſervices, "his Lordſhip means to reward me "handſomely,

" handſomely, and enable me to live " without being under the neceſſity of " continuing in ſervitude."——" And " what deed art thou to do, Jaques, to " gain that reward?" The confuſion of Jaques increaſed. " It is for my paſt " ſervices, my dear Margaret, and not " for any other deed, that I am about " to be rewarded." The doubts expreſſed upon Margaret's countenance, and the conſciouſneſs of guilt which haunted the mind of Jaques, deſtroyed the pleaſure which had before filled his imagination, and made him recoil with horror from the contemplation of the character he was about to act; but the proſpect of the wealth and independence he ſhould acquire, by rendering himſelf ſubſervient to the gratification of his maſter's paſſions, and the certain loſs he ſhould experience by not proceeding to the

the completion of the deed he had undertaken to perform, ruſhed in full force upon his mind, and, after a ſhort ſtruggle, expelled the remorſe he had began to feel, and ſtimulated him to advance in the path he had entered. Margaret perceived the abſence which he diſplayed whilſt this conflict between virtue and ſordid intereſt occupied his mind, and ſuſpected ſome evil deed was in agitation; but Jaques, aſhamed of the confuſion and abſence of mind he had exhibited, aroſe, and, with an affected ſmile and tender ſqueeze of the hand, took his leave.

The Baron frequently ſince his laſt interview with Jaques had thought of the fair one, of whom the latter had given a deſcription. This, quaint as it was, being uttered with a peculiar degree of warmth, had inſpired Umfreville with ideas of the beauty of Matilda, which,

at

at every repetition became ſtronger and more vivid, and rendered him fretfully impatient for the arrival of the hour when he was to be gratified by a ſight of the lovely object. Thus impatiently anxious, he aroſe at an early hour, ſent for Jaques, and arranged with him the manner of his diſguiſe, which was ſettled in a ſhort time, but not ſoon enough for the impatience of the Baron. At length they ſallied forth together, the Baron being habited in the dreſs of one of his own retainers; and tho' ſome ſhare of dignity was impreſſed upon his countenance, yet it was ſo much mixed with meanneſs as to detract nothing from the ſuppoſition of his being nothing more than a ſuperior domeſtic of the Baron de Umfreville. The fineneſs of the morning formed a ſtriking contraſt with the dark purpoſe of their minds; and it cannot be wondered

dered at, if they had no reliſh for any of the numerous beauties of Nature, which ſpontaneouſly courted their obſervation; the louring gloom, or the tempeſt's roar, would have been more in uniſon with their feelings, and congenial to their minds.

Matilda was ſitting at the door of the cottage, enjoying the beauties which beamed in the ſurrounding proſpect; the beautiful and ſublime were happily blended, and by their intimate union increaſed the pleaſure ariſing from the contemplation of each. Fields cultivated and fertile formed the fore ground of the picture, through which a ſmall river ſlowly meandering, added a freſhneſs that delighted the imagination, whilſt it gratified the ſenſes. Behind, hills clothed with wood and covered with verdure, formed the aſcending ſteps to the

the back ground of the landſcape, which conſiſted of mountains rugged and rocky, whoſe tops were loſt in vapour, and whoſe ſides were deſtitute of fertility. Jaques and the Baron walked leiſurely on, as if taking a walk, allured by the beauty of the morning, until they approached the ſpot where the innocent unſuſpecting Matilda ſat muſing upon the ſcene before her. The approach of ſtrangers rouſed her from her reverie. The Baron no ſooner ſaw the beautiful Matilda, than ſhe appeared every thing that Jaques had related of her, every thing that his own inflamed imagination had pourtrayed her, and even conſiderably more. "So, fair damſel," ſaid Jaques, "you ſeem to be employed "in the ſame manner that we are, con-"templating the beauties of the morn-"ing." Matilda replied by courteouſly

inviting them into the cottage, an invitation which they did not hesitate to accept. Annette set before them some refreshment, the Baron gazed upon Matilda and was silent. Jaques was about to mention again his proposition for them to quit the cottage, and accept apartments in the castle, when an unexpected accident favoured his design. The cottage had been built in a great hurry, and of materials not properly prepared, in consequence of which, whilst the Baron and Jaques were there, one of the main supports of the building suddenly gave way. A loud crack informed the party of their danger, and scarcely were they safe in the open air, than it fell and was in an instant a heap of ruins. Annette screamed, and loudly lamented the despoiling of her furniture; Matilda sighed and lamented the destruction of the dwelling,

dwelling, which had now become dear to her; whilſt the Baron and Jaques, though apparently ſympathizing with the diſtreſſed females, ſecretly exulted at the opportunity it afforded of furthering their iniquitous purpoſe. Jaques without heſitation offered them apartments in the caſtle, adding, "I am ſure my Lord, "the Baron, is of too good and humane "a diſpoſition, to have the leaſt objec-"tion to ſuch an arrangement: Is he "not Pierre?" addreſſing himſelf to the Baron, who readily anſwered in the affirmative. There was now no alternative, they muſt either accept the offer or have the ground for their bed, and the ſtars for their covering; it was of courſe accepted, and it was agreed that Jaques ſhould ſend ſome of the inferior domeſtics at the caſtle, to aſſiſt in extricating the furniture from the rubbiſh, and that An-

nette and Matilda ſhould wait the arrival of Colin and Conrad, that they might all depart together for the caſtle; where it was promiſed by Jaques, that apartments ſhould immediately be fitted up for them, obſerving, that my Lord the Baron would exult in the thought of making a virtuous family comfortable and happy. "Not a doubt of it," ſaid the diſguiſed Baron, "and you may reſt aſſured "of enjoying there, a permanent and "comfortable reſidence." The propoſition of Jaques having thus been accepted, himſelf and the Baron immediately took their leave, the latter rejoicing that chance had ſo far favoured his deſigns, as to cover with a ſpecious and amiable pretext, the invitation of Matilda to the Caſtle; an event which was exactly the identical circumſtance, neceſſary as a preliminary to the plan he began

began already to form, for the ſeduction of Matilda. Jaques could with difficulty conceal his joy; the prize of plenty and independence preſented itſelf to his mind, and excluded every other conſideration. At length they arrived at the Caſtle, and the aſſumed domeſtic became once more the haughty and powerful Baron de Umfreville.

Apartments adjoining thoſe occupied by Jaques, were appropriated to the uſe of the new inhabitants, which they took poſſeſſion of on their arrival. All of them were pleaſant; but that which was given to Matilda enjoyed the moſt beautiful proſpect. Conrad, with his uſual curioſity, wandered over all the apartments that were acceſſible to his view; but ſeveral yet remained which he had no opportunity of inſpecting, and his curioſity remained ſtill excited. He re-

joiced at his arrival, imagining it might be a ſtep towards the end he had in view, but anxiety for Matilda conſiderably abated his joy.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

THE Baron reflecting upon the former ſituation of Matilda, and the want of education which muſt be viſible in her conduct, determined to add the accompliſhments of mind to corporeal beauty, and by employing the ableſt maſters the age afforded, to give an elegant poliſh to her manners, and render her a proficient in the polite arts; by means of which her perſonal beauty would become more faſcinating and voluptuouſly enchanting. His only deſign concealed

under this apparent act of kindneſs, being to render the gratifications of ſenſe more poignant, and add to their voluptuouſneſs, by making the accompliſhments of mind ſubſervient to their demands. But to employ means for the accompliſhment of Matilda alone, would have diſplayed a very ſuſpicious appearance, as he underſtood from what was ſaid at the time the cottage tumbled into ruins, that Colin had a ſon. He therefore reſolved to ſend for Colin, who knowing not for what purpoſe he was wanted, was uſhered trembling into the preſence of his Lord, and hardly dared to lift up his eyes to the contemplation of the being, who in magnificent ſtate was ſeated before him, and who immediately addreſſed him thus, "Colin, you have been "a faithful retainer to me, you have "rendered ſervices which I think deſerve a higher

" a higher reward than you have hitherto " enjoyed." Colin bowed, and endeavoured to ſtammer out an awkward acknowledgment; the Baron continued, " I " am informed you have a ſon and daugh- " ter; of the beauty of the latter, and " of the good underſtanding of both, I " have heard much, and have determin- " ed, in conſequence of what I have " heard, and your faithful ſervices, to " releaſe you from all labour for the re- " mainder of your life, and by means of " the beſt preceptors the country affords, " to educate your ſon and daughter in " all thoſe accompliſhments, which it " has hitherto been conſidered the ex- " cluſive privilege of nobility to poſſeſs " and diſplay." Colin was ſtruck dumb with aſtoniſhment, and knew not how to expreſs his gratitude, he made many awkward attempts, but the Baron knew

the fell purpoſe of his mind, and wiſhed not to hear thanks of which conſcious guilt told him he was undeſerving, but immediately diſmiſſed Colin to his own reflections. He had now aſcended an important ſtep towards his purpoſe, he had ſecured the wondering gratitude of Colin, and his family, which there was every probability would inſpire them with a veneration for his character, and render them blind to his ſiniſter deſigns.

Colin returned to his family in an extaſy of joy, he danced and capered and ſung, until Annette and Matilda and Conrad, all concluded he had been ſeizèd with a ſudden fit of inſanity. Conrad took hold of him, and endeavoured to ſoothe his mind to reſt, but Colin ſtill jumped and roared until breathleſs and exhauſted; he at laſt ſat down impelled by fatigue in the midſt

of

of his wondering family, and related the events which had given riſe to ſuch a paroxyſm of tumultuous joy. In the concluſion of his relation, addreſſing himſelf to Conrad, he ſaid, "I did not "tell his lordſhip that you was not my "ſon, ſo you know you can profit by "the opportunity." The idea of being no longer in a ſtate of labouring ſervitude, and of ſeeing her daughter decked in all the accompliſhments and graces of a lady, took excluſive poſſeſſion of the mind of Annette, and made her alternately laugh and cry, unable to moderate the ſenſations of joy, that agitated her mind. Matilda received the intelligence with unfeigned ſatisfaction, but a doubt at the inſtant aroſe in her mind, relative to the intentions of the Baron, in performing an act of ſuch apparent kindneſs and benevolence,

It was an act ſo oppoſite to the general tenor of his character, that ſhe was at a loſs to what motive to aſſign it; but the purity of her own intentions, and the goodneſs of her heart, would not permit her to arraign the motives of another, and ſhe contented herſelf with imputing his conduct to a ſudden ray of benevolence, darting through the general gloom of his mind, or to a change beginning to operate in his character, of which this was the firſt forerunner; the latter became her favoured ſuppoſition, ſhe loved to contemplate the bright ſide of human affairs, and dwelt with complacency upon the idea of a haughty and vicious tyrant becoming on a ſudden, a kind and beneficent maſter. The mind of Conrad was not ſo complacently charitable to the intentions of the Baron; there appeared to him a cloven

cloven foot beneath the lovely garb of benevolence. The offer, which Jaques (the known confidant of the Baron, and as report had ſince whiſpered him, the pander of his vices,) had made previouſly to the ruin of the cottage, of apartments in the caſtle for Colin and his family, added to the preſent apparently kind and beneficent act, inſpired his mind with ſuſpicions, which when he contemplated the beauty of Matilda, and the character of the Baron, met with confirmation ſtrong. He muſed upon the ſubject, and determined to profit by the inſtructions of the preceptors deſtined for him by the Baron, whilſt he keenly and circumſpectly watched the conduct of the latter relative to Matilda, and warned her from time to time of the dangers that environed her.

Preceptors were procured, and Margaret

garet was appointed to attend on Matilda as her ſervant. The lovely Matilda, with quick perceptions, and a fine underſtanding, ſoon became a proficient in every polite accompliſhment, muſic and dancing ſhe acquired with rapidity, and in her execution diſplayed a grace peculiarly her own; with a little aſſiſtance, but principally by means of her great natural powers, ſhe became learned in Latin and Greek, and having conſtant acceſs to the library of the Baron, taſted and enjoyed all the beauties of the poets and orators, with whoſe works it was adorned, which added increaſing vigour to the naturally fine taſte Matilda already poſſeſſed; whilſt the ſtrong intellectual powers of Conrad eagerly devoured, and healthfully digeſted every particle of knowledge, that was offered to their graſp. He alſo became an ardent

dent admirer of the Latin and Greek authors, a knowledge of whoſe language he rapidly acquired; and frequently would Matilda and himſelf remain for hours in the library, with their minds abſtracted from every other ſubject, and active alone in literature. The father of the preſent Baron, was a man of no mean literary attainments, and took a pleaſure in collecting every manuſcript that was likely to repay the trouble of attention, which he read with avidity, and ſtudied with the greateſt aſſiduity. A new day of literature had began to dawn upon Europe, and with delightful complacency he watched the progreſs of its riſing ſun. Pity that his learning and his talents had not moderated the pride which ſwelled in his boſom, and harſhly diſplayed itſelf in his conduct. Dying at an age when many men

men are in the prime of life, he left his library a monument of his taste and his learning, and a son the reverse of himself, at least in literary desires, who attentive only to the turbulent gratifications of sense, or the noisy din of warlike atchievements, had not the least relish for the calmer and more pure enjoyments of literature. He looked down with ineffable contempt upon its pursuits, and since the death of his father, had never visited his library. His heir equally sensual, and equally averse to literary occupation, since the days of pupillage, had never employed an hour in the cultivation of literature. Conrad and Matilda remained thus undisturbed in possession of the library, where day after day, they together read, mused, and reflected; now with Homer soaring to the sublimest heights of imagination,

gination, accompanying Virgil through fields of delightful and varied ſcenery, or catching with rapture the poetic fire of Horace; now unfolding the hiſtoric page, to experience the mingled ſenſations of horror and delight, complacency and regret, and now amid the contemplations of philoſophy, imbibing acuteneſs of judgment, and comprehenſion of underſtanding.

The knowledge Matilda thus acquired was more than the Baron intended; he only wiſhed her to become a proficient in muſic, ſinging, and dancing, and the graces of polite demeanor and converſation, that in the intervals of languor, the exerciſe of her accompliſhments might ſerve as a new enjoyment, and whilſt they prevented the wearineſs attendant upon the languid ſenſations of ſatiety, might operate as a

ſtimulus

ſtimulus, and rouſe the ſated voluptuary to new enjoyment. With this view, ſeveral females had been educated at the expence of the Baron, and now reſided in the Eaſt Tower of his manſion, ſubſervient to his call, and ſubmiſſive to his will. But even variety itſelf had loſt its charms by repetition, and in ſpite of his voluptuous care, ſatiety, and diſguſt, added to remorſe, with all their accumulated horrors embittered his moments, and to every languid hour attached its attendant miſery. But deſpiſing penitence, and endeavouring by ſtill deeper draughts of ſenſuality to intoxicate his mind, and deaden his feelings, he impatiently waited for the completion of Matilda's education, when her beauty and graceful accompliſhments might bury in oblivion,

vion, at leaſt for the moment, the gloomy horrors of his mind.

Her preceptors endeavoured with conſummate art to ſeduce her mind from the contemplation of virtue, and to unite a paſſive voluptuouſneſs, with an active deſire to pleaſe, but their efforts were vain. A natural delicacy of ſentiment averted her mind with horror from the conſideration of vice, and not only deprived their inſidious precepts of the intended effect, but wreſted them to the purpoſes of virtue and innocent amuſement. It was Conrad who enabled her to dive into the depths of philoſophy, and feaſt upon the ſtores of literature.—The Baron, to ſhield his deſigns from obſervation, had been compelled to employ preceptors capable of initiating her ſuppoſed brother into the learning of the age. From them he quickly derived the

the acquirements of language, and thoſe he conſtantly imparted to his beloved Matilda, until ſhe alſo was capable of partaking in the enjoyments of literature, and though not poſſeſſed of the ſame ſtrength of intellect, derived an equal degree of pleaſure from the participation.

Conrad who, at the firſt ſound of the Baron's determination, had perceived his ſiniſter intentions, and from the tendency of the ſentiments which the inſtructors of Matilda frequently endeavoured to infuſe into her mind, became confirmed in his ſuppoſitions, frequently warned her of the danger attendant upon her beauty. But Matilda, happy in the enjoyments of literature, and the ſociety of Conrad, ſaw no danger immediately in view, and attributed the friendly warning of Conrad to a tender ſolicitude for her welfare, which

which made his perceptions outſtrip the actual exiſtence of circumſtances. Conrad, however, thought much and deeply upon her ſituation. The danger with which her virtue was threatened, was to him evident. Her father was too much abſorbed in the gratifications of the moment, to poſſeſs a mind capable of reflection, added to this, the kindneſs of the Baron had lulled him into ſecurity, and he would not have believed that he aimed at the ſeduction of his daughter. Colin was open and free, a lover of good living, and a votary of Bacchus. His breakfaſt was no ſooner finiſhed, than he thought of his dinner, and to prevent the tedium of expectation, would now and then, to paſs away time, take a copious draught of good ale. His dinner ended, he began to think of his ſupper, frequent libations of ale ſerved to fill up the

the vacant hours until he again ſat down to the covered table, when a little eating, and more copious libations of ale finiſhed him for the night, and left him juſt ſenſe enough to guide himſelf to bed. Whilſt Colin had regular employment, and limited means, he was ſober and diligent; want of mechanical labour left him without any reſource to paſs away the tedious hours, and the plenty before him, added to his natural love of good living, made him a glutton and a ſot. The mind of Annette was not equal to the foreſight of Matilda's danger, and Conrad alone was her guardian and her friend. Frequently would he ſtray with his lovely charmer at the decline of day, and whilſt they watched the ſetting ſun gradually ſinking beneath the horizon, until the lengthened ſhadows were loſt in twilight, Conrad would remark upon the beauties

beauties of the proſpect; then fixing his eyes upon Matilda, imagination took flight; and already he ſaw her bereft of her innocence, a prey to the ſeductive arts of the Baron. Horror in the thought, he would involuntarily ſhudder, and awake from a deep reverie, of which he had been unconſcious. Matilda obſerved theſe frequent fits of abſence, and wondered at the cauſe. He became penſive and ſad, and frequently revolved in his mind the means of reſcuing his beloved Matilda from the danger which awaited her, but irreſolution hovered over him, and he could determine on no plan, through the means of which ſhe might eſcape. It would perhaps have been difficult to have carried any into effect: to convince Colin and Annette of its expediency, would have been abſolutely impoſſible,

impoſſible, and to attempt it without their knowledge, muſt be futile and abſurd.

Matilda by her gentle temper and amiable demeanour, had won the heart of Margaret, whom Jaques frequently viſited; reſerve was not in his nature, and frequently he would talk to her of the independence he expected, when a happy union ſhould crown his love.—Margaret interrogated him concerning the ſource from whence he looked for his wealth to ariſe; and Jaques would frequently utter half ſentences, which created wonder and ſurprize in her mind, and made her ponder upon his words, until ſhe could no longer aſſign them any meaning. But he had juſt reſolution enough to refrain from informing her of the Baron's real deſigns relative to Matilda; and the latter was led inſenſibly to the brink of the precipice

pice whilſt imagining ſhe was ſtill upon ſure ground. The Baron had frequently employed himſelf in conſidering what ſhould be the manner of his firſt interview with Matilda. A formal introduction would at once have betrayed his intentions, whilſt he recollected his promiſe to Jaques, and wiſhed if poſſible to evade its performance by adminiſtering in this caſe to himſelf, without being indebted to his valet for any further exertions, or become dependent upon him for the concealment of any ſecret. At length he determined to meet her, as if accidentally, and thus begin a converſation. With this intention, he deſcended from his magnificent apartments, and frequently walked about for a conſiderable time, to the no ſmall terror of his domeſtics, who with palpitating hearts ran quickly out of his way, and ſheltered

themſelves in their reſpective apartments. But Matilda was not to be met with. Had he walked into his library he would have found her; but that was a place where he had not the moſt diſtant expectation of ſeeing her, and the love of literature never tempted him to enter within its walls. Here frequently Matilda and Conrad ſat treaſuring in their memories the truths of hiſtory and of ſcience, or incorporating with their reflections the maxims of virtue and of morality; whilſt the man who intended to become the deliberate ſeducer of Matilda, paced before the door with ſolemn ſtep and a mind alternately ſoothed by pleaſing expectation, and agitated by dreadful remembrances; and often though intent upon the contemplation of the beautiful object who had faſcinated his ſenſes, a ſudden and gloomy horror would

would dart acroſs his mind, ſtarting and looking back with affrighted air, he was loth to turn again and continue his walk. Matilda never quitted the library till the Baron had retired to dinner, and thus for the preſent ſhe eſcaped him.

Arthur de Umfreville had ranged himſelf with a body of his father's retainers under the royal ſtandard, and had been abſent from his paternal manſion during the whole period of Matilda's reſidence at the caſtle. He now led home the diminiſhed numbers of thoſe who had accompanied him, and arriving late in the evening, the ſetting ſun had already began to gild the diſtant ſpire, and the wearied labourers upon his father's extenſive domains to anticipate the domeſtic comforts of the cottage, when Arthur at the head of the retainers of Umfreville, approached the caſtle where the Baron had

long expected him, and now came forth with every ſplendour of dreſs and pomp of attendance to meet the heir of his houſe. Neither poſſeſſed thoſe delicate and refined feelings which could engraft the complacency of delight upon their interview, and after a formal and ceremonious reception the retainers who had followed Arthur were diſmiſſed, and he rode with his father ſlowly to the caſtle, which after a ſhort converſation he quitted to take a walk in the environs. The evening was peculiarly inviting, the ſun being now ſet, and a coolneſs diffuſed through the atmoſphere, which, after the heat of the day, attached the moſt pleaſing ſenſations to every beautiful proſpect that caught the eye. Proceeding without any ſettled purpoſe he arrived at a hill, up which he aſcended, where on its ſummit ſat Conrad and Matilda in earneſt converſation.

converſation. The beauty of the latter bereft him of all power to move; he gazed in rapture, devoured every charm, and dwelt upon every feature. Matilda happening to caſt her eyes towards the ſpot where he ſtood, and perceiving a youth in the warlike habiliments of a chief, intently gazing upon her, bluſhed and became confuſed. Conrad directing his ſight to the ſame place glanced it upon Arthur, and immediately recollected his perſon. Obſerving his eager looks directed towards Matilda, he immediately aroſe, and ſeizing her hand raiſed her from the ground, and led her back towards the caſtle, ſeeming not to have obſerved the heir of Umfreville. Arthur followed them at a diſtance, and at length ſaw them enter the caſtle. Upon the rack to become acquainted with the name and ſituation of the intereſting female whoſe charms

had faſcinated his mind; he eagerly bent his ſteps homewards, where he no ſooner arrived than he ſent for Jaques and anxiouſly enquired who it was he had ſo ardently gazed at. Jaques was ſomewhat embarraſſed by the eagerneſs with which the enquiry was made, but at length informed him ſhe was educating at the expence and under the protection of his father. Arthur knew too well the meaning thoſe words were intended to convey, and ſighed at the anſwer he received. The expreſſive beauty of Matilda had fired his breaſt with a paſſion which he perhaps might call love, but which an obſerver of human nature, critically exact in appropriating to each ſenſation of the mind its true denomination, would have deſcribed by another name. The reply of Jaques conveyed to the mind of Arthur a diſappointment of thoſe

hopes

hopes which he had inſtantaneouſly formed at the moment of contemplating the charms of the lovely Matilda. He became abſorbed in reverie, repeatedly revolving in his mind the probabilities of gratifying that paſſion which agitated his breaſt; he could form no ſpecific plan, but ſtill thought it was poſſible to convey her ſecretly away to ſome place where ſhe might remain concealed from the knowledge of his father, and he remain ignorant of the perſon who had wreſted her from his graſp. But, alas! he only thought of reſcuing her from the abyſs into which ſhe was in danger of being plunged, to daſh her down the precipice that frowned terrifically at her ſide; his only object was to ſatiate thoſe paſſions which in common with his father he poſſeſſed, and to the gratification of which, in common with his father, no principle of virtue hindered

him from giving an unlimited rein. But it was at beſt a romantic ſcheme; his father was too eagle-eyed in every circumſtance that concerned his ſenſual enjoyments, to allow much hope of its ſucceſs, whilſt a diſcovery would expoſe him to all the effects of that anger which he deprecated and feared. Agitated and diſappointed he paced about the room, with now hurried, now ſlow ſtep, and could not reſolve upon any plan by means of which his own baſe purpoſes might ſucceed in preference to thoſe of his father.

The night was ſpent in perturbed ſleep, the morn ſummoned him to the chace; its hurry and buſtle, its cheerfulneſs and its hope, for a while baniſhed from his mind the lovely image that haunted his repoſe, but again arriving within the walls of the caſtle it returned with

with redoubled force; with anxious eagerneſs he had entered the manſion in hopes of meeting with Matilda, diſappointed in the expectation he walked backwards and forwards abſorbed in thought, ſcarcely conſcious of his movements until he forgot the hour of dinner. The Baron concluding he was detained by the length of the purſuit, waited a little time, and at length ſuppoſing it would be uſeleſs to detain the dinner longer, as his ſon might have been led to a great diſtance by the ſuperior fleetneſs of the ſtag, ſat down to table. Arthur was ſtill pacing below, abſorbed in reverie, and did not obſerve Conrad paſs him; Matilda happened to remain a minute or two longer than her lover, and then quitted the library for the purpoſe of returning to the apartments of her parents; it was juſt at the moment ſhe had ſhut the library door that Arthur

arrived

arrived at the ſpot; he ſtarted at the ſight of her, but immediately recollected himſelf and addreſſed her, "Lovely "Damſel" he began; Matilda had turned towards her apartments, when the ſound of a voice induced her to turn again her face, and ſtarting at the ſight of the Cavalier, whom ſhe had obſerved gazing ſo intently upon her the day before, he continued, "Lovely Damſel, your exquiſite "beauty diffuſes a cheerfulneſs through-"out the caſtle, which diſſipates all its "former gloom." Matilda bluſhed and curtſied; "it is a phenomenon I little "expected to contemplate upon my arri-"val here after the fatigues of warlike "atchievements, but for thoſe labours "the pleaſing ſenſations it creates are an "ample remuneration." Matilda bluſhed more deeply, the lilies of her face were tinged with the bluſh of the roſe-bud,

and

and her beauty was heightened by the confuſion; the ſtyle of hyperbolical compliment, with which ſhe had been addreſſed, was novel and unexpected; ſhe knew not what to anſwer, nor the object of ſuch an addreſs: he ſtill continued, "the ſight "of ſo lovely a Damſel is indeed unex-"pected; to what cauſe am I to attri-"bute your cheering appearance in this "diſmal manſion." Matilda was unacquainted with the perſon of the heir of Umfreville, but, ſurprized at his queſtion, ſhe ventured to ſpeak in return. "May I aſk, Sir, the name of the Cheva-"lier who hath honoured me with this "notice." "I am the only ſon of the "Lord of this caſtle." "In anſwer to "your queſtion, my Lord, me and my "parents are indebted to the kindneſs "and benevolence of your noble father "for the aſylum we here enjoy, and the

" benefits we partake of; my father is " an humble retainer of the Baron de " Umfreville, and the beneficence of his " Lord has releaſed him from labour for " the remainder of his life." The dignified humility with which theſe words were uttered by Matilda ſtruck an awe into the mind of Arthur in ſpite of himſelf; the ſiniſter intentions which lurked beneath the kindneſs and benevolence of his father he was well acquainted with, and ſecretly curſed his depraved duplicity, whilſt himſelf was about to commence a career of deceit equally criminal, for he now conceived the project of expoſing to her the deſigns of his father, and then enſuring her gratitude, by delivering her from his fell graſp, in order that himſelf might the more eaſily triumph over that virtue which he was only angry his father ſhould rival him in the deſtruction of. Though ſome-

ſomewhat awed by her manner he perſiſted in his purpoſe. "Your ſituation "may be humble, fair Damſel, but, how-"ever inferior it is, you are intitled to "all the protection that honour can af-"ford;" but (lowering his voice) that "protection, I fear, you will not here "experience." Matilda was ſtruck by his words; he ſeemed from his manner to take a peculiar intereſt in her fate, and a myſtery hung over his laſt expreſſion, which, coinciding with the repeated warning hints ſhe had received from the penetrating Conrad, darted into her mind the moſt gloomy and fearful apprehenſions; apprehenſions the more terrific, becauſe, fearing the worſt, and having no well defined object to fix themſelves upon, or to guard againſt; ſhe involuntarily trembled. Arthur perceived the impreſſion he had made upon her mind;

he

he perceived the anxious curioſity he had excited, and immediately determined to poſtpone its gratification. Matilda looked at him with inquiring eyes, whilſt he ſtill continued, "Lovely Matilda, we "ſhall be interrupted here, meet me "alone in the library to-morrow morn- "ing at eight, and I will diſplay to you "the precipice upon the brink of which "you are unconſciouſly ſtanding;" with theſe words he quitted her abruptly, and aſcended to the dining-room where his father had ſome time finiſhed his repaſt. Arthur excuſed the lateneſs of his appear- ance by relating a marvellous tale of a long and fatiguing chace; whilſt Matilda remained at the library door, where the voice of Arthur had firſt ſtruck her ear, for many minutes abſorbed in a deep reverie, "but that protection I fear you "will not here experience" ſtill vibrated upon

upon her ear and fixed the contemplation of her mind. Surely, ſhe thought, the Baron de Umfreville was not ſuch a monſter as to make the kindneſs and benevolence he had diſplayed towards her father a maſk to conceal inſidious deſigns upon her honour, and enable him the more effectually to perpetrate his intentions. Impoſſible! the world did not contain ſo depraved a villain; it ſurely could not be Conrad who entertained deſigns againſt her honour; then how ſhould the young Baron de Umfreville be acquainted with it. Some other danger muſt await her, but what could it be? An undefined ſuſpicion took poſſeſſion of her mind; her judgment was turned adrift upon the wide ocean of conjecture, and found no friendly haven where it could ſecurely repoſe.

Conrad could not imagine the reaſon

that

that detained Matilda ſo long, and anxiouſly expecting her every moment, at firſt thought ſome favourite author occaſioned her ſtay. At length, becoming alarmed, he haſtily retraced his ſteps towards the library, at the door of which he found Matilda ſtill deeply abſorbed in thought, and gently ſeized her hand, before ſhe was aware of his approach. Matilda ſtarted and directed a look at him, of which he could not conceive the meaning; the winning ſmile with which ſhe uſed to greet him at his approach was abſent, a gloom hung over her countenance, and an enquiring ſuſpicion reſted in her eye, which fixed his mind in ſurprize, and agitated him with fear, "My dear Matilda," ſaid Conrad, "what has detained you ſo long "after my departure, your ſtay began "ſeriouſly to alarm me:" Matilda tenderly glanced upon him, and replied,

"a fin-

" a ſingular incident detained me, which I " will relate to you when we arrive at my " father's apartment." Thither they now repaired, and Matilda ſoon found an opportunity of acquainting him with all the circumſtances of the interview between her and Arthur de Umfreville. Its relation agitated the mind of Conrad with the moſt unpleaſing ſenſations. The character of Arthur was unknown to him, for it was ſcarcely yet developed; and from the manner of his addreſs to Matilda, and the intereſt he ſeemed to take in her welfare, he concluded that her beauty had inſpired him with the tendereſt ſentiments of love, and influenced by this concluſion, he became tortured with all the pangs of jealouſy. The heir of a vaſt eſtate and extenſive domain to become her ſuitor, how was the plea of the humble, but faithful Conrad, to be attended to; her abſence of

mind

mind, when at the library door, ruſhed into his memory; alas! ſhe was thinking of the noble youth who had ſo highly complimented her, and who ſeemed benevolently to ſtep forward to reſcue her from impending danger. That he too, by his unexpected abruptneſs, ſhould wreſt from her faithful lover the palm of warning her againſt the violation that threatened her honour, when the latter had foreſeen it from the firſt, and repeatedly hinted it to the unſuſpecting fair one, was too much; it overpowered his mind, and he cried out with a loud and tremulous voice "Do not meet him, for Heaven's ſake, "my dear Matilda, don't meet him." The trembling earneſtneſs of his manner alarmed Matilda, new dangers crouded upon her imagination, ſhe ſeemed beſet on all ſides with dreadful chaſms, that threatened her with deſtruction; in trembling,

bling agitation ſhe looked at Conrad, who gazed upon her with a wildneſs that ſtill more alarmed her, whilſt in accents equally wild he continued, "my deareſt Matilda, "dangers croud thick upon thy devoted "head, let us away, let us eſcape from "this dreadful manſion, ere it be too "late." Matilda trembled at his words, "How," ſaid the lovely maid, "are we "to eſcape, when the domains of Um-"freville extend for miles around; and "before we can gain a place of ſecurity, "our flight will be diſcovered, and a "ſucceſsful purſuit involve us in new "and more terrible dangers; but pray "calm your agitation, and explain why "you ſo ardently wiſh me not to meet "the young Baron de Umfreville."—Jealouſy had ſeized a ſtrong hold in the mind of Conrad, and her queſtion only ſerved to ſtrengthen its poſſeſſion, but unwilling

unwilling to avow it, he replied, " there " may be danger in meeting him, and " he has nothing new to inform you of; " the danger which he allùdes to, and " with which he wiſhes to make you ac- " quainted, is the violation of your " honour, which it has long been the in- " tention of the Baron to carry into ef- " fect."

The entrance of Annette interrupted the converſation, and the departure of Conrad left Matilda at leiſure to meditate upon his language and behaviour. He had frequently hinted at the danger which he now more explicitly delineated; but ſtill her unſuſpecting mind could not imagine ſo much depravity to reſide in the heart of the benevolent Baron de Umfreville; it was Conrad's anxious love that betrayed him into ſuch a ſuppoſition, It muſt be ſome other

danger

danger in which she was on the point of being involved, but the intended information which he had related to: curiosity stimulated and interested her mind, and she resolved to meet him notwithstanding the agitated desire of her lover. The hour appointed, was previous to that at which Conrad and herself usually repaired to the library, and it would be easy for her to proceed there alone without his knowledge.

The remainder of the day was spent in the company of her father and mother, and Conrad, who appeared pensive and gloomy, and was frequently absent and absorbed in thought. He revolved in his mind the possibility of an escape from that danger which was now imminent, but so many impediments lay in the way that he could form no plan likely to succeed in the execution. The parents of Matilda

tilda would have thought it criminal even to hint at the ſuppoſed ſiniſter deſigns of the Baron, and could not have been induced to conſent to an eſcape, of which the neceſſity was to them not in the leaſt obvious; whilſt herſelf appeared adverſe to ſuch a propoſal, and why, the enquiry was frequently inſtituted in the mind of Conrad, and often jealouſy attributed her apparent deſire to remain to the impreſſion the perſon and manners of Arthur had made upon her heart; but frequently candour attributed it to its right ſource, a diſbelief in the vicious intentions of the Baron. The afternoon was ſpent by Conrad in theſe enquiries and ſuppoſitions, but unable to arrive at any determination or form a reſolution, he at length retired to his chamber a prey to uneaſy ſenſations and gloomy forebodings. Matilda likewiſe retired to reſt; the night

was

was ſpent in broken ſlumbers and agitated ſleep, and the morning no ſooner dawned than ſhe aroſe, tired rather than refreſhed with the interrupted ſleep ſhe had experienced, and anxiouſly watched the riſing of the ſun; it ſeemed to be peculiarly tardy and later than uſual, with difficulty ſhe perſuaded herſelf that it had not before ariſen, obſcured by a cloud; at length it majeſtically appeared, and the tremulous chorus of gratitude from the ſurrounding trees vibrated upon her ear. Matilda in ſpite of her anxiety was penatrated with rapture and delight, with gratitude and veneration; a prayer poured forth from the fullneſs of her heart cheered her mind, and calmed the tumult of her ſpirits; and ſhe appeared at the breakfaſt table with a cheerfulneſs that delighted Conrad, and made him forget for a moment every ſenſation of jealouſy and danger.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

THE appointed hour ſwiftly approached, and with difficulty ſhe concealed the perturbation which now affected her ſpirits; at length it was nearly arrived, and unable to ſtay any longer ſhe ſlipt away unperceived, and repaired to the library; no one was yet there, and ſhe took up a book to divert the paſſing moment, but the agitation of her mind was too great to allow her to abſtract it, and ſhe was compelled to throw it aſide, and wait with palpitating heart for the approach of Arthur; at length the door opened, and entered not Arthur, but the Baron de Umfreville.

Matilda

Matilda had never ſeen the Baron, except when he called in diſguiſe at the cottage of her father, and therefore did not know who the perſonage was that entered the library; ſhe had taken little notice of the perſon who had accompanied Jaques, but the face immediately ſtruck her as one ſhe had before ſeen, though could not recollect where. He was ſurprized at meeting with Matilda in a place where he had never thought of ſeeking for her, but rejoiced at the opportunity which now occurred when he leaſt expected it. Matilda was not long before ſhe gueſſed from the dignity of deportment and ſplendour of dreſs of the perſon who ſtood before her, that he could be no other than the Baron de Umfreville, and reſpectfully aroſe from her ſeat for the purpoſe of retiring from the library. The Baron perceiving her intention im-

mediately advanced, and ſeizing her hand, whilſt he rapturouſly gazed upon the trembling maid, ſaid, " lovely angelic " Matilda, I have heard much of your " exquiſite beauty and delicately pro- " portioned form, but the ſight of your " charms far exceeds the portrait my own " ſanguine imagination had formed." Matilda trembled and was agitated; a thouſand thoughts ruſhed at once into her mind, and agitated her frame. The Baron preſſing her hand warmly between his, continued, " I know not which " moſt to admire, the delicate and ad- " mirable proportion which appears in " your ſhape, or the exquiſite loveline's " that beams from your countenance; " and had I the taſk of pourtraying a " Venus, you ſhould be the beautiful " model." The laſt expreſſion of the Baron offended the nice delicacy of Matilda;

tilda; to the name of Venus ſhe had annexed ideas of not the moſt virtuous nature, and ſuch a mode of expreſſion ſeemed to imply a doubt of her innocence, which her high notions of female honour could not brook. A frown upon her lovely brow at once exhibited her anger, and diſplayed a ſevere dignity, which diſconcerted the Baron, in ſpite of his hardened depravity; ſhe replied, "my "beauty is undeſerving of thoſe enco-"miums, my Lord," (for ſhe now cercertainly concluded it was the Baron de Umfreville) "which your Lordſhip has "been pleaſed to beſtow upon it. It is only "a temporary advantage, which a thou-"ſand accidents may deſtroy, and which "is beneath the applauſe of wiſdom." The dignified innocence, diſplayed by Matilda, was ſo oppoſite to the manners he expected from a girl placed under

that tuition which he had employed, that he felt himſelf in ſome meaſure diſappointed, though his paſſions were ſtill inflamed by the contemplation of her beauty, and a deſire to triumph over that dignity of ſoul, which beamed in the eyes of Matilda, and made the contemptible mind of the Baron ſhrink within itſelf; he was a little embarraſſed, but again proceeded. "The enjoyment of the "preſent moment is all we can aſpire to, "and that it is in the power of beauty "eminently to heighten and aſſiſt; for "wiſdom only conſiſts in paſſing away "the fleeting hours, with the leaſt poſ-"ſible wearineſs and laſſitude." The ſophiſtry of the Baron made no impreſſion on the mind of Matilda, who immediately replied: "Wiſdom, my Lord, will "only own thoſe hours that are em-"ployed in the contemplation and prac-

"tice

" tice of virtue." True," ſaid the Baron, with a duplicity to which he had been long accuſtomed, " but virtue is " frequently moſt diſplayed in ſubmitting " to neceſſity. The end to be attained " by human actions, is happineſs; and " to attain that happineſs, there is fre- " quently a neceſſity to gratify inclina- " tions which would otherwiſe prey upon " the human frame and corrode its ex- " iſtence. To ſubmit to this neceſſity, " inſtead of ſtruggling againſt it only to " endure miſery, is true virtue, although " ſome cold philoſopher may have called " it vice."—" If, my Lord, we were " only to exiſt a few fleeting years and " then be annihilated, to ſtudy only the " enjoyment of the moment, might be " virtue; but—" The Baron felt a terror overwhelm his mind, in ſpite of the lovely object he was eagerly contem-

plating, and anxious to put a ſtop to a converſation which ſeemed likely rather to increaſe than to diſſipate his fears, prevented Matilda from finiſhing her period, by leading her forward, and requeſting her to take a view of the ſpacious rooms which the caſtle contained, and which ſhe had never yet ſeen. Matilda was agitated, the Baron held faſt her hand, and ſhe knew not what to do, ſhe wiſhed to free herſelf from his graſp but knew not how. At length, ſhe ſaid, whilſt he led her on towards the ſtaircaſe, "my condition, my Lord, is "too lowly to entitle me to ſuch a "mark of your Lordſhip's condeſcen-"ſion; permit me to retire to my hum-"ble apartment." "Your beauty and "accompliſhments, my lovely Matilda," replied the Baron, "would adorn any "ſituation, however dignified or ſplen-did."

" did." By this time they were arrived at the foot of the ſtaircaſe, up which the Baron aſcended, holding Matilda faſt by the hand, and, with the utmoſt politeneſs and ſuavity of manners, leading her along; an univerſal trembling ſeized the lovely maid, and ſhe would gladly have retired, but knew not how to eſcape the polite importunity of the Baron.

They ſlowly advanced, her noble conductor at every turn looking courteouſly around, and, intreating her to be cautious of her ſteps, and at length arrived at the ſummit. Matilda looked back and ſighed, preſentiments of the moſt fearful nature agitated her mind; Conrad ſeemed to ſtand before her and intreat her to return; all the friendly hints he had given her, his agitated behaviour on the preceding day, and the myſterious conduct of Arthur, all arrayed themſelves in fearful re-

membrance and abandoned her to terror and affright; ſhe turned pale, and hardly would her tottering limbs perform their office. The Baron led her through a magnificent ſuite of apartments each decorated in a ſplendid and peculiar ſtyle, but the beauty of which, Matilda abſorbed in reflection was incapable of enjoying. At length opening a pair of beautiful folding doors, he led her into a room fitted up in a more magnificent ſtyle than any he had yet exhibited to her view. Couches and ſophas covered with the gayeſt ſilks and ſparkling with embroidered gold were arrayed in fanciful order around it. The tapeſtry diſplaying in faſcinating colours the moſt voluptuous ſcenes crimſoned the cheek of Matilda with the bluſh of modeſt ſhame, whilſt the cieling continued the ſame meretricious alluſions, and fixed her lovely eyes in confuſion upon the floor,

floor, but even there to be inſulted with a repetition of the ſame elegant but voluptuous ſcenes. Diſguſted and offended ſhe turned them towards the windows, but only to receive additional pain; the light was admitted through tranſparencies, which diſplaying ſome faſcinating ſcene of meretricious love received an additional heightening from the vivid tints that played upon the figures. The frames of the mirrors which completed the furniture of the room were ſimilarly adorned, and the table was inlaid in the ſame ſtyle. Matilda confuſed and agitated, and viewing with contempt and horror the man who had led her to the contemplation of ſcenes at which innocence muſt revolt, made a violent effort to diſengage her hand and retire from the ſpot, determining to fly with eager haſte to her paternal apartment, and die rather than again

be allured into the preſence of the Baron. He had foreſeen ſuch an attempt, and whilſt with calm complacency and extreme politeneſs he held her hand, it was graſped ſo tight that all the efforts of Matilda could not releaſe it, and overpowered by her fears ſhe ſcreamed in agony. The Baron appeared not to notice her ſcream, or her ſtruggle, and with a ſimilar ſuavity of manners intreated her to be ſeated, at the ſame time leading, or rather pulling, her forwards towards a ſopha which ſtood before them. He immediately ſeated himſelf, but in the act of doing ſo his graſp of the hand of Matilda became leſs forcible and ſhe found herſelf diſengaged; with trembling eagerneſs ſhe flew to the door, but it was faſtened by a ſecret ſpring, and all her efforts, the exertions of deſpair, failed to uncloſe it. A pair of folding doors, on the oppoſite ſide, attracted

tracted her attention, and agonized she flew to them with a similar hope of escape, but, alas! these too were fast; no hope remained, and Matilda clasped her hands in the agony of despair. The Baron sat coolly and unconcerned upon the sopha; he knew she could not escape, and he considered her despair as a matter of course. As a last resource she knelt to the Baron, and in piteous accents intreated his permission to retire to her parents. The distress in which she was plunged gave a new fascination to her beauty, and the throbbings of her bosom created alternate palpitations in the breast of the Baron. But that her agonizing accents should have penetrated him with emotions of pity would have been indeed a phenomenon; he rapturously gazed for a while upon the beauty which offered itself to his contemplation, and then rais-

ing her up with the utmoſt politeneſs, but calmeſt depravity, ſaid " my lovely " Matilda, you have here nothing to " fear, permit me to prevail on you to " accept of ſome refreſhment;" Matilda, whoſe terror was increaſed by the cool indifference of the Baron, burſt into a flood of tears and piteouſly wept, whilſt Umfreville, who had regained her hand, and ſeated her beſide him on the ſopha, watched the heavings of her agitated boſom, and perceived new beauties in every throb. She obſtinately refuſed all refreſhment, and would again have knelt to the depraved character who calmly contemplated her diſtreſs, had not he prevented her. But again, in accents ſtill more piteous, ſhe begged and intreated permiſſion to retire, pourtrayed in the moſt expreſſive language the anguiſh of her parents, and the diſtreſs of her brother,

ther, at her ſudden diſappearance and long ſtay; but the Baron was too hackneyed in depravity to be moved by her intreaties, or by refuſing them, to diſplay at once the fell purpoſe which occupied his mind. In the moſt ſoothing accents he requeſted ſhe would not be diſtreſſed, as ſhe was perfectly ſafe, and no danger near to agitate her mind; but Matilda was too well convinced of the extent of her danger, and ſobbed with more diſtreſsful vehemence at the inattention with which her intreaties were received.

The Baron at length quitted her hand, and went to the folding doors oppoſite to thoſe by which he and Matilda had entered; the latter immediately ran to the laſt, and again endeavoured, with the ſtrength of deſpair, to eſcape from the hateful room which had now become her priſon, but all exertion was vain; the

ſpring

ſpring which faſtened them was to her unknown, and a much greater portion of ſtrength than was poſſeſſed by the feeble Matilda would have failed to force them. He had ſhut the doors by which he had quitted the room, but ſoon they were again opened, and two females advanced voluptuouſly dreſſed, and looking all but chaſtity. Matilda again had recourſe to intreaty, and implored them to aſſiſt her in eſcaping from her cruel impriſonment; again the diſtreſs of her parents, and her brother, was the theme; and again ſhe piteouſly intreated their commiſeration and aſſiſtance. They heard her with attention, but in accents that conveyed no hope to her mind, aſſured her ſhe had nothing to fear. They had brought new apparel, which they requeſted ſhe would put on, but Matilda reſolutely refuſed to change her dreſs, and, perſiſting in her reſolution, they

they were forced to desist. They requested her, however, to accept of some refreshment, calmly adding, they feared she was a little exhausted. Her agony of distress had, indeed, exhausted her spirits, and she accepted of a little fruit which lay upon the table, but no intreaty could prevail upon her to taste any of the liquors with which it was plentifully spread. The females, who had entered the room, began a conversation with some degree of spirit and vivacity, though tinctured with a boldness, which disgusted the innocent simplicity of Matilda; but perceiving she noticed neither them, nor their sprightly chat, they arose from their seats, each taking a hand, and rather forced than led her along to the adjoining chamber, and from thence into an inner one, where was a bed and toilet, together with all the conveniencies of repose; but although

though not fitted up in the ſame ſplendid ſtyle as the chamber in which ſhe had endured ſuch agonizing diſtreſs, yet all breathing the ſame tainted air of voluptuouſneſs. This chamber, they informed her, was deſigned for her repoſe, and likewiſe for her reſidence, whenever ſhe choſe to retire to its ſolitude. They then invited her to a repaſt, at which they aſſured her ſhe would meet with agreeable company; but Matilda, abſorbed in grief, perſiſted in remaining where ſhe was, and finding it in vain to preſs their requeſt, they left her to her own reflections, and quitted the room.

Her firſt care, after their departure, was to faſten the door, and then with diſtreſsful anxiety ſhe inſpected the chamber, in hopes of diſcovering ſome means of eſcape, but in vain would the moſt ſcrutinizing eye have ſearched, the pre-

caution

caution of the Baron had been too carefully exerted to allow of the moſt diſtant proſpect of deliverance. There was no door, except that by which ſhe had entered, and the windows, even had they not been carefully barred, were at too great a diſtance from the ground without, to allow of any rational attempt to eſcape by them, added to which they were at ſome diſtance from the external wall, in which openings were made of the ſame dimenſions with the windows; to admit the light and air. Thus diſappointed, ſhe ſunk down upon a chair in an agony of deſpair, which may be conceived, but cannot be expreſſed; now ſhe blamed herſelf for not promptly flying from the caſtle, when Conrad gave her the ſignal of danger, now for her credulity in believing the Baron devoid of depravity; now for not raiſing the houſ-

hold

hold by her ſcreams, when the perfidious monſter was leading her up the ſtaircaſe; now the moſt terrific apprehenſions filled and agitated her mind, until ſhe ſtarted with horror, and fancied ſhe heard the depraved violator of her honour burſting open the door that ſeparated them, for the purpoſes of brutality. She paced the room in anguiſh and deſpair, until ſeized with faintneſs, which hinted the neceſſity of refreſhment, and recollecting the invitation of the females who eſcorted her into the room, ſhe determined to quit it, for the purpoſe of obtaining that of which ſhe was greatly in need.

Let us now return, for a ſhort time, to Conrad, to Arthur de Umfreville, and the parents of Matilda. A rumour had ariſen, and reached the ear of the Baron de Umfreville, that his enemy, the Baron de Montacute had armed a body

body of his retainers, and was about to make an hoſtile inroad into the domains of the former. Immediately upon the receipt of this intelligence, the Baron de Umfreville ordered his ſon to arm a number of his retainers, with the utmoſt ſecrecy, and march to meet the attack. Arthur, curſing ſuch an event, was forced to comply, he had no valid reaſon to plead for refuſing to obey his father's commands, and ill health would only have been conſidered as another term for cowardice. Thus circumſtanced, he gave the neceſſary orders in the evening, made preparations for his departure, and after a ſhort ſlumber was compelled to depart privately in the night without the knowledge of the houſhold, and thus was prevented from attending his appointment in the library.

The Baron had been unuſually diſturbed

turbed by terrific dreams, and after paſſing a diſagreeable night, aroſe earlier than he had for a long time before, and Jaques having ignorantly placed ſome books of muſic belonging to his maſter in the library, the latter, who was at a loſs how to employ his time, determined to go himſelf in ſearch of them, and hence enſued his unexpected, and to Matilda, unfortunate, appearance in that repoſitory of literature, which had not witneſſed his preſence for many years before.

Conrad, when he diſcovered the abſence of Matilda, concluded ſhe had repaired to the library for the purpoſe of having an interview with Arthur de Umfreville, in purſuance of the latter's appointment, and her conduct, in this inſtance afforded a proof to his imagination, that the fine figure of Arthur, the elegance of his deportment, and the intereſt

tereſt he ſeemed to take in her welfare, had made an impreſſion upon the heart of Matilda, which threatened to efface that engraven by his own love. His mind flew off upon the tangent of jealouſy, and remained for ſome time expoſed to all the tortures of ſuſpicion; he paced his chamber in unutterable anguiſh, and frequently in imagination ſaw the youthful Arthur kneeling at the feet of his beloved Matilda, inſpiring her with love, and exciting in her breaſt the moſt tender ſentiments of affection.—Imagination winged its way, and ſaw them united in indiſſoluble bonds, and himſelf caſt off to endure the unutterable pangs of diſappointed love. At length he determined to repair to the library, his beloved haunt, where he found a ſolace for his cares, and an uſeful employment for his time. But perhaps, Arthur

thur was ſtill there infuſing into the boſom of Matilda all the tenderneſs of his ſentiments: excruciating thought! he lingered, and did not dare to proceed, ſuch a ſight would overpower all the firmneſs of his mind; it was now more than an hour beyond the uſual time of his and Matilda's entrance into the library; he ſtarted up, and ſuddenly reſolved to go, trembling he opened the door, and hardly dared to look forwards, until the vacancy of the apartment forcibly ſtruck his eye. Surprize for a moment deprived him of recollection; at length he concluded ſhe had returned to her father's apartment; to that he immediately proceeded, where he found Colin much indiſpoſed from the effect of frequent potations of ale, and Annette ſitting by his ſide, but Matilda was not there. The perturbation of his mind

was

was viſible in his countenance in ſpite of himſelf, and ſo obſerved by Annette, ſhe eagerly enquired if any thing was the matter. Conrad recollected himſelf, and thinking ſhe might, perhaps, be in her own apartment, would not give unneceſſary pain to her parents, and therefore anſwering in the negative the queſtion of Annette, he ſat down and chatted for a ſhort time with apparent eaſe, until the torture of his mind became too great to be concealed, and he abruptly quitted the room. Again in ſorrowful ſuſpenſe, he bent his ſteps towards the library, but Matilda was not to be found. A ray of hope ſtill ſhot through the gloom, and he went to the door of her apartment, where he knocked, and receiving no anſwer, opened the door, but Matilda was not there. In the ſame ſpirit every apartment belonging to the houſhold

houſhold was ſearched, and with ſimilar ill ſucceſs. The laſt glimmering of hope now fled from his mind, and left it involved in all the darkneſs of deſpair; but ſtill involved in uncertainty and ſuſpence, he knew not to what cauſe the diſappearance of Matilda ought to be attributed, and whilſt the deciſion of his judgment reſpecting it vibrated between the machinations of the Baron, and the love of his ſon, as he walked along the paſſage, he was accoſted by Jaques, who obſerved, "It is a fine day for the Lord Ar-" thur." "Why for the Lord Arthur?" retorted Conrad, with a conſiderable degree of impatience! "What, do you "not know of his departure?" replied Jaques. A ſervant at this moment ſummoned Jaques to the preſence of the Baron, who immediately obeyed the command, and left Conrad a prey to

tortures

tortures, which all the refinement of cruelty, operating upon bodily ſuffering, would have failed to inflict. Not a doubt now exiſted in his mind that Matilda had departed with Arthur de Umfreville: "Faithleſs and perfidious maiden, to ſmile upon my agitated ſoul, "when ſhe meditated to wound it with "the keeneſt arrows of cruelty."—Scarcely conſcious whither he was going, he approached again the apartment of Colin, where he and Annette were ſtill in the ſame poſition, and had no ſooner entered it, than he ſunk into a chair, overpowered by the agony of his reflections, regardleſs of ſurrounding objects. The ſtate in which he appeared, alarmed the parents of Matilda, not only for him, but they began now ſeriouſly to imagine that ſome dreadful accident had befallen their daughter;

he recovered a little, and her mother in tremulous tones aſked, what was become of Matilda: "Alas I know not," was the reply of Conrad, which plunged them at once into the deepeſt diſtreſs. Conrad at length, recovered ſufficient calmneſs to relate all the circumſtances attendant upon her diſappearance, with which he was acquainted, and the certain concluſion which muſt be drawn from them of her flight with Arthur. His relation, whilſt it relieved them from ſuſpence, only added to the poignancy of their grief.

The clangor of arms was now heard without, and Conrad ignorant of the cauſe, ran to enquire, when to his no ſmall ſurprize, he ſaw Arthur de Umfreville, at the head of the Baron's retainers. Conrad now learnt the reaſon of his expedition, and that the rumour having

ing proved unfounded, his return had been accelerated. It inſtantly occurred to Conrad, that the expedition of Arthur was a pretext, and that he had carried away Matilda by force, and depoſited her in ſome place guarded by his ſatellites, where he alone might have acceſs. The ſuppoſition gathered irreſiſtible force from concurring circumſtances, and with difficulty was Conrad reſtrained, by prudential conſiderations, from attacking, even at the head of his armed band, the man whom he now conſidered as the brutal deſpoiler of Matilda.

The retainers were diſmiſſed, and Arthur entered his paternal manſion, whilſt Conrad ſtruggling with impatient anger, at length found means to ſpeak to him, and requeſted a private interview, ſaying in an angry tone, "I am the brother

" of Matilda." Arthur, ſurpriſed at the requeſt, heſitated a moment; but conſidering that his deſigns upon her could not have been diſcovered, and at the ſame time with a view to the carrying into effect thoſe ſiniſter intentions, wiſhing to conciliate her family, acceded to the deſire, and diſmiſſing his attendants, retired with Conrad into the library. The place forcibly ſtruck the mind of the latter, and whilſt it added to the poignancy of his grief, gave vehemence to his anger: they were no ſooner alone than Conrad ſcarcely able to moderate the indignation that ſwelled in his breaſt, with difficulty, aſſumed ſome humility, and ſaid, " Where, Lord Arthur, have you " carried my ſiſter?" Arthur, amazed at a queſtion ſo unexpected, heſitated and looked at Conrad, as if waiting for that explanation which himſelf was called upon

to

to give. The latter conſidering the heſitation and ſilence of Arthur as convincing proofs of his guilt, could no longer ſtifle the flame that agitated his mind, and drawing his dagger from his belt, called out with the moſt terrific vehemence, "Villain, tell me where ſhe is, "or by St. Mark, thou ſhalt not go out "here alive." At the ſame time advancing with threatening aſpect, and menacing action. Arthur ſeriouſly alarmed for his life, mechanically drew his ſword, and thus prevented the nearer approach of his exaſperated adverſary. It was now rendered evident to the former, by the words of Conrad, that Matilda had diſappeared, no cauſe was adequate to the production of ſuch an event, but the execution of ſome ſcheme planned for that purpoſe by his father, and no doubt remained in his mind, that either by means

of force or fraud ſhe was immured in the Eaſt Tower, which was known to be appropriated ſolely to the pleaſures of the Baron, and completely inacceſſible to all except himſelf. Curſing the too ſucceſful wiles of his father, and believing he had been ſent upon his morning's expedition, for the ſole purpoſe of preventing any exertions of his from intercepting the views of the Baron, he immediately conceived, that the only remaining chance of ſucceeding in his deſigns, depended upon his perſuading her brother that his paſſion for her was honorable, and that he ardently wiſhed to be united to her in the holy bonds of matrimony, thus inducing Conrad to aid the execution of thoſe plans which he might form for the purpoſe of reſcuing her from the violation of his father, to gratify his own inclination. Influenced by theſe conſiderations,

ations, he replied to the anger of Conrad with a calm firmneſs; "Conrad, you are "miſtaken, I am not the unprincipled "robber who has baſely torn the lovely "Matilda from the arms of her parents, "and the affection of her brother; but "I much fear a near relation of mine is: "and the ſuſpicions of my mind ariſe "into a conviction, that ſhe is immured "in yonder tower, and deſtined to be "offered up a helpleſs victim upon the "altar of my father's pleaſures: Aſſiſt "me in thoſe endeavours I am deter-"mined to make, for the purpoſe of "reſcuing her from brutal violation, "and your reward will be ample, inde-"pendent of the pleaſure you muſt ex-"perience in having a beloved ſiſter "reſtored to your embrace, and in ſee-"ing that ſiſter the wife of the heir of "Umfreville." The earneſtneſs of Ar-

thur completely deceived the pretended brother of Matilda, and he actually ſuppoſed that an honourable paſſion for her really exiſted in the breaſt of the former; and though its declaration ſtruck a dagger to his heart, yet the thought of aſſiſting in reſcuing his beloved Matilda, from the dangers that threatened her innocence, and her honour, overcame every other conſideration; and convinced of the ſincerity of Arthur in his relation of the ſituation in which ſhe was placed, he replied, ſheathing his dagger, and aſſuming an humble deportment, whilſt Arthur depoſited his ſword again in its ſcabbard, "I hope your lordſhip will par-
"don the rudeneſs of my anger:"—
"Mention it not," interrupted Arthur,
"We are friends, united in a common
"cauſe; and in endeavours for its ſuc-
"ceſs, let every ſpark of mutual anger
"be

" be extinguiſhed;" at the ſame time giving his hand to Conrad, and exulting in his mind at the ſucceſs which had crowned his efforts to engage the aſſiſtance of the latter in the execution of a purpoſe, which had he known, he would have plunged his dagger into the boſom of the perfidious betrayer; Conrad accepted his hand, rejoicing at the hope which now gleamed acroſs his mind, that he might yet deliver Matilda from the mercileſs fangs of the Baron, added to the conſolation of knowing, or at leaſt having a probability, almoſt amounting to certainty of the place where ſhe was confined; but their mutual joy ariſing from different cauſes, was conſiderably damped by the difficulty and danger that attended every ſtep they muſt take in purſuit of the object they had in view. They conſidered the ſubject for ſome time, and

various plans offered themſelves to their notice, but no one which appeared well adapted to the end they aimed at. At length the lateneſs of the hour warned them to ſeparate, and not having been able to agree upon any ſcheme, worthy of being carried into execution, they parted, with a mutual reſolution of meeting again early on the morrow in the ſame place, for the purpoſe of further conſidering the means of attaining their object; and though the impatience of Conrad ill brooked delay, he was conſoled by the aſſurance of Arthur, that from the firm virtue of Matilda the danger was not imminent, as the Baron would not have recourſe to force, but as a laſt reſort, and after repeated trials.

In the mean time Colin, diſtracted by his apprehenſions for his daughter, ran from room to room bewailing and lamenting

lamenting her loſs, in terms dictated by the deepeſt diſtreſs, and anxiouſly enquiring of every retainer in the houſehold if they had ſeen, or heard of, Matilda. Her diſappearance became the general topic of converſation, and could be accounted for by no one. Jaques, amongſt the reſt, became informed of the event, and his amazement ſoon gave way to affliction; all the hopes of independence, that had danced before his view, were now vaniſhed, perhaps for ever. A ſuſpicion entered into his mind, that the Baron had, unknown to him, conveyed her into his apartments, but it brought no relief to his diſtreſs, and hardly appeared to wear the face of credibility; not any one in the houſehold knew what was become of her, and that the Baron ſhould convey her away alone, without the knowledge of any of his retainers, ſeemed

ſcarcely within the bounds of poſſibility. Margaret was abſorbed in grief at the loſs of her miſtreſs, for whom ſhe had a real affection, and ran to Jaques to enquire of him where ſhe was fled, but he had no information to give, and was himſelf the victim of diſtracting doubts and fears. A meſſage, from the Baron, now ſummoned the afflicted Jaques to his preſence, who went trembling with fear, and not daring to look forward to future events.

Colin, in the anguiſh of his grief, aſcended the ſtaircaſe where ſo lately his daughter was led reluctant by her vile ſeducer, and, gaining admiſſion to the Baron, threw himſelf at his feet, and, in the wildeſt language, informed him of the ſudden diſappearance of his daughter. The Baron affected the utmoſt ſurprize, raiſed up the afflicted father from his humiliating

humiliating ſituation, and enquired minutely into the circumſtances that had attended the mournful event. The latter, in ſorrowful accents, related, in a tedious detail, every circumſtance that he knew which had any reference to the event, whilſt the Baron, with conſummate hypocriſy, attended to the lengthened tale of the afflicted Colin, and, adminiſtering conſolation to his mind, promiſed he would uſe his utmoſt endeavours to diſcover the place of her concealment, but gave him little hope of again beholding his daughter; ſome dreadful accident muſt, doubtleſs, have befallen her, and the moſt anxious purſuit would, moſt probably, only lead to the diſcovery of her pallid and lifeleſs corpſe. Colin heard him, and wept anew, whilſt the Baron aſſured him of an ample ſupport for the remainder of his life, and diſmiſſed him with numberleſs

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the reſt of his houſehold, had not the leaſt ſuſpicion of her confinement, whilſt he had cancelled his obligations to Jaques, and would not be, in future, indebted to him for the concealment of any ſecret. It ſtill remained to deceive the relatives of Matilda, and likewiſe his houſehold, into a belief of her death, by ſome circumſtances more cogent than ſuppoſitions; in what manner this muſt be done was a queſtion of ſerious conſideration, and he ſet himſelf to diſcuſs it with much attention. For if he could, in this way, put the finiſhing ſtroke to his work of deception, Matilda would be ſecurely his, without the leaſt fear of her being, at any time, delivered by force, or fraud, from his tyrannic graſp.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

IT is now time to return to Matilda, whom we left after ſhe had determined to quit her chamber in ſearch of refreſhment; in purſuance of which determination, ſhe opened her door and advanced into the room into which ſhe had been led out of that wherein ſhe was faſtened by the Baron. No one was there, and ſhe anxiouſly ſought for an outlet, by means of which ſhe might eſcape. The folding doors that led to the Baron's apartments it was uſeleſs to try, but on another ſide of the room, ſhe obſerved a door, which upon endeavouring to open,

obeyed

obeyed her efforts, and led to a paſſage. Traverſing this with trembling ſtep and palpitating heart, ſhe at length came to a flight of ſtairs:—Joy beamed in her countenance, with eager haſte ſhe deſcended to the bottom, when ſhe found herſelf in another paſſage, from whence doors opened into ſeveral apartments; into each of theſe ſhe entered, and examined them all with the moſt anxious hope; but cruel diſappointment! the windows were all barred in the ſame manner, and at a ſimilar diſtance from the external air as thoſe in her apartment; and no outlet was to be diſcovered leading either into the remaining part of the Caſtle, or the open air, except a maſſy door locked and ſtrongly bolted, which it was impoſſible for her to unlock or open. The only remaining hope of the unfortunate Matilda reſted in re-

aſcending

aſcending the ſtaircaſe, having obſerved it was continued beyond the floor on which her chamber was ſituate. Arriving at the paſſage from whence ſhe had commenced her deſcent, no one appeared, and ſhe proceeded up the ſtairs until ſhe had reached another paſſage opening into ſeveral chambers, but all blocked up in the ſame manner. She aſcended to the top of the ſtaircaſe, examining every apartment in the way, but the ſearch was equally fruitleſs, and ſhe was forced to return diſappointed and melancholy, to the room adjoining the hateful chamber that had been appropriated to her; where on opening the folding doors oppoſite to thoſe that led to the apartments of the Baron, ſhe found herſelf in a ſort of anti-chamber leading to a ſpacious apartment, where a number of elegant females, voluptuouſly dreſſed, were ſeated; ſeveral

of

of whom courteouſly aroſe to welcome her; they had finiſhed their repaſt, but immediately ſpread a table for Matilda, with a number of the moſt delicate viands, whilſt a ſideboard was near her covered with exquiſite liquors. Matilda, ſuſpicious of harm, eat very ſparingly and cautiouſly; but poſitively refuſed, notwithſtanding the raillery of her companions, to taſte any liquid, except water. Having finiſhed her repaſt; the females who were ſeated around her, endeavoured to amuſe and entertain her, by their vivacity and wit; but their converſation conveyed only diſguſt to the mind of Matilda; and exhauſted by grief, ſhe ſoon retired to her apartment, and locking the door, ſat muſing upon her misfortunes until the ſhades of evening threw a gloom around her, when ſhe retired to reſt; but during ſeveral hours

ſleep

ſleep fled from her eyes, and corroding anxiety baniſhed all repoſe, until towards morning exhauſted nature ſunk under the preſſure of grief and fatigue, and a profound ſleep in ſome meaſure renovated her ſtrength.

In the morning, Arthur and Conrad met in the library purſuant to their appointment of the preceding day, and endeavoured to form ſome plan, likely on its being carried into effect, to afford them ſucceſs in their object of releaſing Matilda from the captivity in which ſhe was with great probability ſuppoſed to be plunged. The Eaſt Tower, where doubtleſs ſhe was placed along with a number of other females deſtined for the pleaſures of the Baron, was completely cut off from all communication with the remaining part of the caſtle, except by means of the folding doors, that led

led into the Baron's apartments, and from thence to the common ſtaircaſe, and of which he always kept the key.—There was alſo another door leading to the dungeons below, of which the key was likewiſe anxiouſly kept by the Baron. The extent of theſe dungeons, and the paſſages leading to the different ſubterraneous apartments were not known to either. Nor were they acquainted with any communication whatever with this formidable tower, but through the apartments of the Baron, in which he conſtantly reſided, or through unexplored dungeons and ſubterranean caverns. In this dilemma it was extremely difficult to fix upon any plan, by the execution of which, they could avoid imminent danger and enſure a chance of ſucceſs. So pregnant indeed with dangers and inſuperable difficulties was every ſcheme they formed, that at length they agreed

as

as a preliminary ſtep, to explore the dungeons beneath, for the purpoſe of diſcovering, if poſſible, a paſſage to the door which led into them from the bottom of the Eaſt tower. For Arthur had ſome recollection of the place, having been repeatedly in it when a child, whilſt it was fitting up in the manner it now appeared, and knew of the door which led to the ſubterranean apartments; though with the extent of thoſe dungeons and the manner of their communication with each other, he was unacquainted. But if they could arrive at this door at a time when the females, who reſided in the tower, were at dinner, there would then be leiſure to examine it, without the riſk of being diſcovered, and it might be aſcertained whether any poſſibility exiſted of reſcuing Matilda.

Matilda did not awake until ſhe was

ſummoned

ſummoned to breakfaſt, and then ariſing, reluctantly quitted her chamber, to partake of ſome of that food neceſſary to her exiſtence, and which ſhe could not obtain in the apartment where ſhe would otherwiſe have gladly remained. After ſilently finiſhing her repaſt ſhe withdrew from her companions, for the purpoſe of again retiring to indulge her melancholy and her grief alone and unobſerved.—Upon entering the apartment which ſerved as a chamber of communication between the room ſhe had juſt quitted, and the voluptuouſly furniſhed apartment of the Baron, a ſhadow upon the floor ſtruck her eyes; ſhe looked up and the Baron de Umfreville himſelf ſtood before her. Matilda involuntarily ſcreamed, and turned to regain the apartment ſhe had quitted. But the Baron immediately ſeizing her hand, ſaid, "my

"lovely

" lovely Matilda, I bring you a letter " from your brother;" preſenting one to her at the ſame inſtant, which ſhe ſeized with an eager and palpitating anxiety, that was ſuppoſed by the Baron to originate in her anxious deſire to learn information concerning her parents; but which, had he been penetrated with the leaſt ſuſpicion of her attachment to Conrad, the lover inſtead of the brother, would have been a ſufficient proof of her love. Almoſt immediately after giving the letter, and without ſpeaking again, he retired to his own apartments. Matilda was not ſlow in repairing to her chamber, where a thouſand mingled emotions agitated her mind at the moment of uncloſing the billet; of which joy at the adroitneſs of Conrad, in thus making the Baron himſelf ſubſervient to their love, was not the leaſt forcible. But what

was her diſappointment when ſhe read the following lines.

DEAR SISTER,

It is the deſire of your parents and myſelf, that you will make yourſelf perfectly happy in your new reſidence. It has been long deſigned for you, and it is with the conſent and approbation of your relatives that you are placed there. We are all in good health, and with fervent wiſhes for your welfare and happineſs.

I remain,

Dear Siſter,

Your affectionate Brother,

CONRAD.

The Baron, it was evident, had committed a forgery, which unintentionally he had rendered too palpable and evident to cauſe a moment's deception.—

Without

Without the leaſt ſuſpicion of Conrad's being the lover of Matilda, he had made him write to her as a brother, and thus completely diſcovered his own depravity. The high hopes Matilda had formed when ſhe received the letter from the Baron, were now daſhed to the ground, and the diſappointment was the more acutely felt in proportion to the greatneſs of the expectation. The forgery which the Baron had committed for the evident purpoſe of inſidiouſly undermining her firmneſs, plunged her ſtill deeper into deſpair; no hope remained of eſcaping from the priſon in which ſhe was immured; and perhaps a few fleeting days might ſee her forcibly hurled from the high pinnacle of virtue, into the abyſs of vice. The agitation of her mind almoſt overpowered her judgment, and ſhe was ſcarcely conſcious of any thing

around her, when she was summoned to dinner. Returning still more disgusted at the conversation of her female companions, all the despair of her mind became renewed with redoubled force, and she was almost tempted to rid herself of the misery in which she was to all appearance hopelessly enveloped, by putting a period to her existence; the thought increased her horror, she paced the room in indescribable agony, and with the most innocent simplicity offered up a prayer for safety and peace. The perturbation of her mind gradually decreased and yielded to sensations of a more placid nature. She went to the window, and through the bars of her prison, obtained a faint glimpse of the beautiful prospect which extended itself in view; the sight contributed to infuse a greater portion of calmness into her agitated soul, and she remained

remained contemplating the beauties of nature until the ſun had ſunk below the horizon, the mixed darkneſs of twilight was at an end, and the ſtars twinkled in the ſurrounding ether. Something which ſeemed to move before her eyes made her ſtart, but ſoon recovering herſelf, ſhe concluded it was a deception of ſight; again it moved, and more attentively looking, ſhe diſcovered it to be a ſlight pole or rod that was introduced at the outward opening, and ſlowly protruded towards the window where ſhe ſtood. Amazed at ſuch an occurrence, ſhe remained for ſome time in ſuſpenſe, and ſtill ſuppoſed it to be only a fancied ſhade; but repeatedly examining the appearance, ſhe was at length convinced of its reality, and on its nearer approach towards her window, there ſeemed to be ſomething ſtuck on the end of the wand.

Concluding from the myſterious nature of the circumſtance, that it was intended for her, ſhe opened the window, took hold of the rod, which was then juſt within her reach, and ſnatched off what was appended to its end, which ſhe found to be a piece of paper curiouſly rolled up. This ſhe opened with a conſiderable degree of agitation, but the darkneſs of her chamber would not permit her to diſtinguiſh its contents; and having taken no precaution to enſure a light, ſhe was reluctantly compelled to delay till the morning, the gratification of that curioſity which now created in her mind the utmoſt anxiety. With aſſiduous care ſhe placed the paper under her pillow, and hardly capable of ſleep from the perturbations of her mind, in the diſturbed ſlumbers which ſometimes cloſed her

eyes,

eyes, the incident of the preceding evening had made ſuch an impreſſion on her imagination, as invariably to occur.

The morning dawn at length enlivened her apartment, and the brilliancy of the riſing ſun having caſt into a temporary obſcurity the gentle light of innumerable ſtars, Matilda awoke from an unrefreſhing ſleep; and rejoicing at the ſunſhine which enlivened her chamber, took the paper from beneath her pillow, and read as follows:

"Deſcend the ſtaircaſe to morrow "when your fellow priſoners are at din- "ner, and unbolt the door, when it will "immediately be opened, and you will "find yourſelf in the arms of him, whoſe "exiſtence depends upon reſcuing you "from your impriſonment. To obviate "ſuſpicion at your abſence from dinner, "pretend indiſpoſition; and to prevent

" your eſcape from being ſoon diſ-
" covered, lock the door of your apart-
" ment when you quit it, and bring with
" you the key."

The note at firſt excited a number of anxious doubts in the mind of Matilda; ſhe feared it was a ſnare to betray her, and another contrivance of the Baron's for ſome fell purpoſe only known to himſelf; but the manner of its introduction, the inſtructions contained in it for her conduct, and above all the words, " the arms of him whoſe exiſ-
" tence depends upon releaſing you from
" impriſonment," forcibly ſtruck her, and carried conviction to her mind that Conrad alone was the author, and the man into whoſe arms ſhe was to be received. She now gave a looſe to joy at the near proſpect of her delivery from impriſonment and brutality. Hope, ſeducing

ducing hope enlivened her mind, and ſhe became nearly as cheerful as when wandering with her beloved Conrad in the boundleſs track of imagination, or through the pleaſant fields that ſurrounded the Caſtle of Umfreville. In this joyful mood ſhe proceeded to the breakfaſt table, where her companions obſerving the alteration in her manner, endeavoured to add to her hilarity. But their manners and converſation conſtantly excited in the mind of Matilda, alternate emotions of pity and diſguſt, and all their exertions rather tended to fortify than eradicate the impreſſions ſhe had received. Matilda in the height of her cheerfulneſs, had nearly forgotten the inſtructions contained in the note ſhe had received the preceding night; but now pretended to be ſeized with a ſudden indiſpoſition, and retiring to her chamber

waited with the moſt anxious ſolicitude and eager impatience for the hour of dinner, when inſtead of partaking of a repaſt rendered diſagreeable by the company with whom ſhe was compelled to aſſociate, ſhe might fly to the arms of him who was the Lord of her boſom, and the conſtant theme of her reflections.

Conrad and Arthur, in purſuance of the reſolution they had formed, determined immediately to explore the dungeon's depth, and the latter having provided himſelf with a number of keys of different deſcriptions, which amongſt other works of mechaniſm he poſſeſſed, and likewiſe with a ſmall lanthern, which might be eaſily concealed, with the utmoſt ſecrecy they repaired to the other ſide of the moat, purſuant to the advice

of

of Arthur, which having croſſed in a ſmall boat the latter had provided, without the knowledge of any one except himſelf and Conrad, and entering by a private door which was eaſily unlocked, they proceeded to that leading to the dungeons, which was likewiſe with little difficulty opened, Arthur having previouſly deceived his father into a belief that he was going upon an expedition for the purpoſe of endeavouring to diſcover ſome deſigns which he ſuſpected had been formed by the Baron de Montacute againſt the territories of Umfreville, and ſhould take Conrad with him, whom he thought might be uſeful. They deſcended together, until they arrived at another maſſy door, which having with ſome difficulty opened, they found themſelves in a ſort of paſſage, on each ſide of which were a number of doors; and they remained for ſome time in ſuſ-

pence, undetermined which of thoſe on the eaſtern ſide they ſhould attempt to open. At length unable to make a choice from the appearance of any reaſons in favour of either, they attacked the firſt that preſented itſelf, and having turned it upon its hinges, advanced into a narrow dungeon, where light and air were admitted by one ſmall aperture.—Here they found ſeveral chains, and divers inſtruments of torture, the ſight of which made them ſhudder and recoil with horror. They inſpected the walls very cloſely, but no door could be diſcovered, nor any other opening, except the entrance and that which admitted a faint glimmering of light. Thus diſappointed, they returned again to the paſſage, and having carefully ſhut the door, proceeded to the next, which having in the ſame manner opened, they perceived themſelves to

be

be in another dungeon, nearly ſimilar to the laſt, but much darker, and in which they were equally diſappointed. In this manner they explored nine dungeons, having a great ſimilarity to each other, and in which they met with the ſame ill fortune.

Tired and fatigued with ſuch a fruitleſs ſearch, they were almoſt tempted to quit it in deſpair; one door only remained, and Conrad ſtill hoping for ſucceſs, urged his companion to make another effort, as that muſt inevitably either lead them on towards their object, or certainly convince them of the impoſſibility of proceeding any farther. Arthur ſuffered himſelf to be perſuaded, and they recommenced their exertions. The door they were now eſſaying, notwithſtanding it was unlocked by one of the keys which Arthur brought with him, reſiſted their efforts

efforts to open it, for a conſiderable time, a number of years having elapſed ſince it grated upon its hinges, it required great exertions of ſtrength to puſh it back: at length having ſucceeded; they ſaw before them what they at firſt ſuppoſed to be another dungeon, but no inſtrument of torture or confinement was viſible within its walls, and they now began to hope it was a paſſage leading to another part of the ſubterraneous regions, that they wiſhed to explore. This expectation, to their no ſmall joy, met with a confirmation on their arrival at the end of, what was in reality a paſſage, and they found there a door equal to that at the other end in ſize and ſtrength. Animated at the diſcovery, they uſed greater exertions, and opened it with leſs difficulty, and were now in another paſſage, ſimilar to that they had firſt entered, on the

the eaſt of which was a number of doors equal to that contained on each ſide of the former. They now concluded, and with a great degree of probability in their favour, that the paſſage they had juſt quitted was continued in a ſtrait line, and impreſſed with this ſuppoſition eagerly attacked the door immediately oppoſite; but upon making an entry, their hopes were damped, all the apparatus of a dungeon of confinement, filled up the proſpect before them; and the ſame diſappointment occurred, which had perſecuted them in thoſe they had before examined. The next muſt doubtleſs be that which would gratify their expectation; but here it was again croſſed, and dungeon after dungeon was explored, until they had arrived at the farther end of the paſſage.

Deſpair began once more to throw its gloom

gloom over their minds, when on opening the laſt door, they again ſaw the appearance of a paſſage. Though now much fatigued, a proſpect of realizing their hopes, added new vigour to their efforts, and having forced the door, they found themſelves once more in a paſſage, and eagerly looked for the door on the other ſide, but none was to be perceived. Surpriſed and diſappointed, they inſpected the oppoſite wall again and again. From their ſituation they were convinced it was not the boundary of the dungeons, but as nearly as they could gueſs, the commencement of the Eaſt Tower; but notwithſtanding, however, the minuteſt inſpection, they could not diſcover any trace of a door, and were about to quit the ſcene of their fatiguing exertions, penſive and ſorrowful, when the foot of Conrad happening to ſlip, he

fell

fell againſt the wall. The ſhock cauſed a brick to fall out upon the ground: the incident excited their curioſity, and looking at the place from whence it had proceeded, they diſcovered ſeveral bricks above and below it to be looſe. Having removed theſe, they diſcovered part of a door with its lock; Arthur endeavoured to open the lock with ſeveral of the keys he had brought with him, but could not effect his purpoſe. Key after key was was tried, but in vain; at length one was found which ſucceeded, and they puſhed againſt the door for ſome time, without being able to move it; until making a deſperate effort, it burſt open with conſiderable violence, and they fell headlong within the paſſage it led to.

Recovering themſelves from their fall, they proceeded: after opening another door into a paſſage, on the ſide of which

from

from whence they had entered were ſeveral doors leading to dungeons ſimilar to thoſe they had explored. On the other ſide they perceived a ſtrong maſſy door which they had no doubt led to the upper rooms of the Eaſt Tower, this they opened with ſome difficulty, and, inſpecting the other ſide, were ſurprized it had been obedient to their efforts, as two ſtrong bolts appeared to have guarded it againſt all ſuch attempts, but looking farther they diſcovered the ſtaples, worn by ruſt, had given way, and fallen from their places, which rendered the bolts inſufficient, and of no uſe. A narrow ſtaircaſe was now before them, which they cautiouſly aſcended until they arrived at a door, which, according to every appearance, was the means of communication with the upper apartments of the Eaſt Tower.

They

They ſeveral times looked through the keyhole, but the paſſage before it was dark, and nothing could be ſeen. They liſtened for ſome time, but could not hear either the footſteps, or voice, of any one. A murmuring noiſe was ſoon after heard, and, liſtening very attentively, they at length diſtinguiſhed female voices above. There was now every probability that the inhabitants of the tower were all together in their common apartment, either at dinner, or converſing afterwards. It was evident, from the number of ſteps they had aſcended, that this was the door leading from the Eaſt Tower to the dungeons below, and Arthur began to try the lock; after numerous trials he at length found a key which unlocked it. This he immediately gave to Conrad, that it might not be mixed with the others which he had

had about him. The joy of the latter almoſt overpowered his ſenſes; the proſpect which he now had of releaſing his beloved Matilda from the dreadful priſon that immured her angelic form, and reſcuing her from the unhallowed violation of her tyrannic gaoler, created a ferment in his mind, and cauſed a tremor upon his nerves, that took from him his preſence of mind, and he ſwore he would inſtantly proceed to her chamber, and deliver her from the dangers with which ſhe was environed.

Arthur, more cool, moderated the tranſports of his companion, which ſeemed almoſt to overleap the bounds of fraternal affection, and having conſidered, for a moment, he obſerved to him it would be imprudent to attempt to force open the door, which he had been ſucceſsful in unlocking, as the noiſe, being

ſo

ſo near the chambers above, would moſt probably alarm their inhabitants, and the conſequence would be, a diſcovery pregnant with danger to themſelves, and equally involving the object of their deliverance. Impreſſed with this conviction Arthur perſuaded his companion to accompany him to the paſſage below, where, without danger of being overheard, they might conſider of a plan likely to afford them ſucceſs. To this propoſal Conrad at length agreed, and having carefully relocked the door, they retired.

Arthur, from the faint recollection he had of the internal part of the Eaſt Tower, thought he remembered that bolts were put upon the door, to enſure a greater degree of ſecurity; for though they were no ſecurity againſt the females who inhabited the place, they muſt effectually

tually prevent any attempt to make an entry from the other ſide. And a combination between any of thoſe females, and perſons without, who were capable of aſſiſting their eſcape, was hardly within the verge of poſſibility.

They were now maſters of all the paſſages through the dungeons, and the lock of the door that led to the apartments in the Eaſt Tower, but to puſh back the bolts, that guarded it on the other ſide, muſt be the work of ſome perſon within. And at any rate it was obviouſly impoſſible the deliverance of Matilda could be effected, unleſs ſhe was made acquainted with the exertions making for her reſcue, and inſtructed how to aſſiſt thoſe efforts, and render her eſcape complete.

The conveyance of this information to Matilda ſtill remained a moſt difficult taſk.

taſk. But it was evident they could proceed no further where they were in the attainment of their object. It was, therefore, reſolved to meaſure back their ſteps, and meet again on a riſing ground, at ſome diſtance from the caſtle, where the Eaſt Tower was in full view, and ſome thought might occur, likely to be of ſervice in the execution of their plan.

They immediately returned, leaving unlocked all the doors in their way, until they arrived at that which led to the upper part of the caſtle; this they had carefully locked before they deſcended the ſtairs, and forgotten the key that opened it; both began to be alarmed, and, with a conderable degree of trepidation, ſeveral keys were tried, but without ſucceſs. Their terror increaſed, and ſcarcely could the trembling hand of Arthur guide each into

into the keyhole, but at length that which had opened it was found, and they arrived in the dark paſſage, where Arthur, having again locked the door delivered it to Conrad, that it might not, by any chance, become mixed with others, and they thus be prevented from purſuing their ſcheme.

They now proceeded through the private paſſage to the moat, which having ferried over, they entered the caſtle, as if juſt returned from their expedition, and whilſt Conrad repaired to the buttery to obtain ſome refreſhment, Arthur aſcended to his father's apartment, and entered into a long detail of the ſuſpicions he entertained relative to the conduct of the Baron de Montacute; adding, that it was neceſſary to watch his motions with conſiderable care, but he had no doubt, with the aſſiſtance of Conrad,

rad, of being enabled to diſconcert all his projects. The Baron was delighted with the active zeal of his ſon, and inveſted him with all the neceſſary powers to purſue his plans, triumphing in the thought of leaving every care to Arthur, and having nothing to diſturb his revelry in thoſe ſenſual pleaſures which were his only delight.

Conrad, after partaking of ſome refreſhment, waited impatiently for the evening, and, impatience riſing into extreme agitation, at length determined him to repair to the place, where Arthur had appointed to meet him, long before the time agreed upon. Having arrived at the ſpot, he took his ſtation behind ſome buſhes which concealed him from obſervation, but from whence he had a full view of the Eaſt Tower, where his beloved Matilda remained a forlorn priſoner. Long

and anxiouſly he contemplated the place; all the happy moments he had enjoyed in her company; all the tender ſenſations he had experienced from the influence of her amiable qualities; every word, and every look, that had eſcaped the lovely maid, and unintentionally diſplayed her love, now unbidden, recalled themſelves to his memory, and ſuffuſed his eyes with tears. The light of the ſun was thrown full upon the Tower, and its dazzling glare prevented him from diſtinguiſhing any object at the windows. After a ſhort time had elapſed, by the further decline of the ſun, the dazzle of its rays was removed, and, a clear and ſtrong maſs of light being thrown upon the Tower, he thought he diſcovered a female at one of the windows; looking again, with the moſt anxious ſolicitude, he was convinced

vinced he had not been deceived. The body of light, which, from the clearneſs of the evening illumined the place, enabled him, notwithſtanding the windows were ſo far removed within, to diſtinguiſh the features. It was Matilda herſelf; ſcarcely knowing what he did he was about to ruſh forward, though without any object to be attained by his exertions. But reflection coming to his aid, he determined to remain, and, whilſt he marked well the window from whence a glimpſe of his beloved Matilda had caught his anxious view, a thought darted into his mind that promiſed him all the advantages of ſucceſs, without being beholden to Arthur de Umfreville, whom, though he believed his deſigns were honourable, he could not but conſider as a rival, and a rival, who from his power and fortune added to his ſhare in the gratitude of

Matilda for her deliverance, would poſſeſs claims, the contemplation of which made Conrad tremble, and ſicken at the fear of being ſucceſsfully ſupplanted in her affections by the potent Arthur.

Conrad had in his poſſeſſion the keys of the private door, that leading to the dungeons, and up to the Eaſt Tower, which were all now neceſſary to paſs through the ſubterranean paſſages, and proceed immediately to the Eaſt Tower, and if he could convey to Matilda the neceſſary information and inſtruction, whilſt he temporized with Arthur, and perſuaded him to another interview for the formation of a plan, he might alone conduct her eſcape, and, flying ſwiftly, be enabled to reach ſome obſcure place of ſecurity, where they might remain till the ardour of purſuit was cooled, in conſequence of repeated ſucceſsleſs efforts,

when

when it was highly probable they would completely effect their escape from the tyranny and anger of the Baron.

These ideas dwelt upon his mind, and absorbed his reflections, until roused from their contemplation by the arrival of Arthur de Umfreville. The sun had now nearly finished its daily course, and the strong clear mass of light that had been thrown upon the windows of the East Tower, was considerably faded, so that the form of Matilda was no longer visible even to the sharpened sight of Conrad. No wonder, therefore, that Arthur could not, after watching for a considerable time, distinguish any object to which the name of Matilda might be applied, and, thus disappointed, began to despair of being enabled to have any communication with her.

Conrad consoled him for the want of

ſucceſs, and obſerved it was highly probable, by coming a little earlier to the ſpot on the next evening, when the light was ſtronger, they might obtain a glimpſe of Matilda, and diſcover the chamber in which ſhe was confined. Arthur acquieſced in the juſtice of the obſervation, but lamented the delay, and propoſed various ſchemes for her deliverance, which were all demonſtrated by Conrad to be futile and inſufficient, unleſs they could communicate with the object their exertions were directed to deliver. The former was convinced of the abſolute neceſſity there was for making choice of ſome means to inſtruct her in what manner ſhe muſt promote her eſcape, to entitle them to any hope of ſucceſs, and at length agreed to meet Conrad on the ſame ſpot at an early hour on the morrow evening. The

latter,

latter, for the purpoſe of properly directing his own efforts, endeavoured to learn of Arthur the beſt plan of eſcape in the event of their imparting the deſign to Matilda, who informed him they muſt convey her from the Eaſt Tower at the hour of dinner, and, remaining in the ſubterraneous apartments until night, eſcape through the private door, having taken the precaution to carry with them a ſuit of male habiliments in which ſhe muſt iſſue from the caſtle. Conrad enquired why they could not convey her by night from the priſon, and effect their eſcape immediately; to which Arthur replied, that ſeveral of the females, inhabiting the place, ſlept on the lower floor, and the noiſe cauſed by opening the door would aſſuredly alarm them, and be the means of diſcovering the plot. The former had now learnt all he wiſhed to be informed

of, and the ſtars having began to diſplay their light they left their ſtation, and had no ſooner arrived at the caſtle, and Arthur aſcended to his apartments, than Conrad began to work upon his plan. Having procured ſeveral ſlender twigs he tied them together until he made a pole, long enough for his purpoſe, and fixed on at the end a pointed iron; he wrote the note, which Matilda afterwards received, and conveyed it in at the external opening, hóping that ſhe might ſtill be at the window, or if not, might perceive its ſhade, or hear the noiſe of it againſt the glaſs, and thus be induced to open it, and take off the paper. When he found, from the motion of the pole, that ſome one had ſeized it, he waited till it ceaſed, and then immediately drawing it down, fearful of being diſcovered, with the moſt joyful emotions

perceived

perceived the note was gone. No obſtacle now remained to the execution of the ſcheme he had formed, and hurrying back to the Caſtle; after partaking of a ſlight refreſhment, betook himſelf to bed, but not to ſleep; the important enterprize he had to execute on the morrow —for important it truly was to his happineſs—filled and agitated his mind, and prevented it from acquiring ſufficient calmneſs to reſign itſelf into the arms of Morpheus; now and then, a ſlumber would ſteal upon his ſenſes, and the dungeons he had explored in the day were continually preſent to his mind.

At length, ſinking exhauſted into a ſleep, which laſted beyond the uſual time of quitting his chamber, he was awakened by a murmuring noiſe in the Caſtle; which, upon liſtening attentively, ſeemed to reſult from a number of voices very

earneſtly converſing: wondering what had intereſted their attention, he liſtened for a while, and plainly diſtinguiſhed the name of Matilda frequently repeated. He now haſted to dreſs himſelf, and leave his apartment, for the purpoſe of learning the cauſe of the agitation, but heſitated a moment at the door, reflecting that his darling ſcheme of delivering Matilda might have been diſcovered, and he only quit his chamber to be immured in a dungeon; recollecting however, his danger would in that caſe be the ſame whether he remained or departed, he opened his door and proceeded to the place from whence the noiſe ſeemed to originate, and where he found nearly all the retainers belonging to the houſehold collected together about the body of a young woman which had been found that day, and dragged out of the moat before the Caſtle.

No

No female had been miſſing from thence except Matilda, and an unanimous concluſion was drawn, that it muſt be her. The features were ſo much disfigured that they could not be recognized, and this made them the more poſitive in their ſuppoſitions. Even Colin and Annette, weeping at the ſight, were convinced it was the corpſe of their daugher; and Jaques himſelf began to curſe his ill fortune at ſo unlucky an event, as he now imagined ſhe was really dead, and that he had wronged the Baron in attributing to his arts her ſudden diſappearance.

It was at this moment that Conrad arrived, and they all waited with eager expectation for his opinion upon the ſubject. He looked for ſome time upon the body before him—it was the ſize of Matilda, but the features could not be diſtinguiſhed, and he remained a conſiderable time

anguiſh and ſurpriſe; but a number of circumſtances were revolved in his mind, and it ſcarcely appeared within the verge of poſſibility that it could be the corpſe of Matilda. He was convinced he had ſeen her on the preceding day, and it muſt doubtleſs be her who received his note; but the body he now viewed appeared to have been in the water ſeveral days; added to this, her dreſs was different from that in which it was attired. Theſe reaſons determined his conviction, but thinking ſuppoſition of her deceaſe in the minds of thoſe preſent might tend to annihilate all ſuſpicion of the ſcheme which he was about to execute for the purpoſe of delivering her; and, at the ſame time, whilſt he had the means of that deliverance in his own power, if he could convince Arthur de Umfreville of her death, it would prevent him from taking any

ſteps

ſteps to aſſiſt her eſcape, and extinguiſh in his mind the laſt embers of that paſſion which ſeemed to agitate his breaſt. Thus Conrad would have the ſole merit of reſcuing his beloved Matilda, and his claims upon her love would not be weakened by the interference of any powerful interloper. This additional ſcheme, which was rather the reſult of cunning than of true wiſdom and magnanimity, and beneath the ſuperior powers of his mind, he immediately proceeded to carry into execution; and it was favoured by the appearance of Arthur, who, hearing a conſiderable buſtle in the houſe, deſcended the ſtaircaſe to enquire into the cauſe of the noiſe.

Conrad, aſſuming an air of deep diſtreſs, thus laconically addreſſed him: "Behold, "my Lord, the ſad remains of my unfor- "tunate ſiſter!" Arthur, ſtarting at his expreſſion, inſtantly approached the body,

and

and remained for a conſiderable time in a ſuſpenſe ſimilar to that which had abſorbed the mind of Conrad when firſt contemplating the ſame ſubject. Various circumſtances were hoſtile to the ſuppoſition of its being the body of Matilda which had been found;—this was only the ſecond day ſince her diſappearance, whilſt the corpſe he was viewing ſeemed to have been bereft of life a much longer time. With her dreſs, on the day ſhe diſappeared, he was unacquainted; this Conrad perfectly recollected, and the difference of apparel convinced him it could not be the ſame. The circumſtance eſcaped the conſideration of Colin and Annette, and Arthur, being ignorant of it, could not poſitively determine, though the probabilities were againſt the ſuppoſition of its being the pallid remains of Matilda. But though he remained in doubt and ſuſpenſe,

it

it appeared to his mind advantageous to his ſcheme, that the houſehold of his father and the parents of Matilda ſhould imagine her dead. He knew his only object was to wreſt her from his father's graſp that he might deſpoil her honour, and become that mercileſs and depraved violator of her virtue and her peace, which he was only angry with the Baron for being to the excluſion of himſelf. If ſhe was ſuppoſed to be dead by her relatives and the houſehold, no farther enquiry would be inſtituted concerning her diſappearance; nor would any ſuſpicion remain relative to the place of her impriſonment, or reſt upon any one reſpecting whatever attempts might be made to reſcue her from her preſent confinement. Conrad too ſeemed to believe it to be the corpſe of his ſiſter, and why could he not carry on his ſcheme without the aſſiſtance of Conrad?

Conrad? The thought ſtruck him, and took poſſeſſion of his mind. The high notions of honour which ſeemed to ſtimulate the mind of Conrad, might very probably be an obſtacle to his views relative to Matilda, whilſt Arthur ſeemed to himſelf fully competent to carry on his ſcheme to a concluſion, without the aſſiſtance of the former. He even began to wonder why he had at firſt called in his aid. Theſe reflections employed the mind of Arthur, during the time he appeared to contemplate the corpſe of Matilda, and determined him to acquieſce publicly in the general opinion; whilſt, privately, he purſued his plan for her reſcue, as, from every circumſtance, he ſtill thought her immured in the Eaſt Tower; and he even doubted whether it was not a ſcheme of his father, for the purpoſe of ſtifling all enquiry relative to the lovely maid, whom he wiſhed to appropriate to himſelf.

Conrad

Conrad perceiving the voice of Arthur concur in the general opinion, ſecretly exulted in all the triumph of ſucceſs; whilſt Arthur, rejoicing with equal animation, immediately aſcended to his father, and determining to deceive him into a belief that himſelf, as well as the Baron's houſehold, and the parents and brother of Matilda, were convinced of the reality of Matilda's death, ſince no ſuſpicion would then be generated in his mind of any attempt likely to be made for her reſcue, informed his father that the corpſe of Matilda had been found, and her diſappearance was now accounted for, though in a melancholy manner.

The Baron, who in reality knew nothing of the matter, at firſt thought it was actually the body of Matilda that had been diſcovered, and in the hurry of his mind was about proceeding to the Eaſt Tower to inſtitute

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an enquiry concerning her exiſtence, but recollecting his ſon was before him, he reſtrained his impetuoſity; whilſt the latter minutely detailed all the circumſtances relative to the accidental finding and appearance of the corpſe in queſtion, which completely convinced the Baron it was not Matilda. Becoming the dupe of his ſon's artifice, he rejoiced in his turn at an incident unexpectedly happening, ſo peculiarly calculated to annihilate all ſuſpicion concerning her confinement, and further the purpoſe of his deſigns. —The advantage to his ſcheme, of a belief on the part of the parents and brother of Matilda, of his ſon and his houſhold, in her death, was obvious and apparent. No obſtacle would then remain to the completion of his purpoſe, and the unfortunate damſel muſt be completely cut off from all communication with ſociety, and bereft of all external aſ-

ſiſtance.

ſiſtance. Perceiving the ſubject in this point of view, he calmly liſtened to his ſon's narrative; and when he had concluded, in order to ſtrengthen that belief in the event of her deceaſe, which ſeemed to remain in uncontrouled poſſeſſion of the latter's mind, he ſaid, that two days before, he had heard, early in the morning, a noiſe in the moat, as if occaſioned by the falling in of ſome heavy body, but not particularly ſtriking his mind, the incident had not again occurred until Arthur's narrative brought it ſtrongly to his recollection.

His father's calmneſs and concluding obſervation rather ſtaggered the mind of Arthur; but, well acquainted with his character, and obſerving the agitation which the firſt mention of Matilda's corpſe had cauſed in his mind, and which, in ſpite of his diſſimulation, appeared in his countenance,

tenance, he ſtill conſidered his ſuppoſition of her impriſonment in the Eaſt Tower to be warranted by a very large portion of probability; and, leaving the preſence of the Baron, determined to purſue the plan he had formed with unabated ardor.

The Baron, well verſed in all the refinements of diſſimulation, immediately ſent for Colin, and condoling with him in terms of the moſt tender ſympathy upon the loſs of his daughter, again aſſured him of a comfortable ſupport for the remainder of his life, and immediately iſſued his command for a pompous funeral to be provided at his own expence; obſerving to the diſconſolate father, that her goodneſs and amiable qualities deſerved every mark of reſpect and attention it was poſſible to beſtow upon her cold and inanimate remains.

The afflicted Colin was in ſome degree

gree cheered by the apparently generous and humane conduct of the Baron, and retired to administer all the consolation in his power to the sorrowing Annette, who was now paying the last duties to the supposed remains of her unfortunate and beloved child.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

THIS incident had employed a conſiderable portion of time, and little now remained before the hour of dinner; for which the anxious Conrad waited with more impatience than the moſt determined glutton or ſenſual epicure. At length the auſpicious moment arrived, and having concealed a ſmall lanthorn in his pocket, and informed Colin he was going a ſhort diſtance into the country, with palpitating heart repaired to the dark paſſage without being perceived; finding means to carry with him ſome proviſions, and likewiſe a complete

complete diſguiſe for Matilda; opening the outer door leading to the dungeon, which he carefully relocked, he proceeded with rapid ſtep and without farther fear through the paſſages which had been purpoſely left open, until he arrived at the door that ſeparated him from his Matilda. Trembling in every limb and with quick and difficult reſpiration, he liſtened for a while and heard the ſame murmuring noiſe from above which had ſtruck his ear the preceding day, and convinced him they were at dinner.—The ſound of a footſtep caught his ear, and more violently agitated, he liſtened with anxious attention; it proceeded towards the door, and, enrapturing ſound, he heard the maſſy bolts recoil from their ſtaples. In a fever of joy he turned the key, the lock reluctantly gave way, the door

door opened, and he caught her in his arms.

He had ſufficient preſence of mind left to relock the door, and put the key into his pocket, and then ſilently led his fair companion down the ſtairs, acroſs the paſſage beneath, and along the ſhort one on the oppoſite ſide, until they arrived in that, on the Eaſt ſide of which Conrad had accidentally diſcovered the concealed door. This door being in the middle of the wall, and the paſſage of communication with the Weſtern dungeons at one end, Conrad concluded it would be the beſt plan to lead Matilda to the other extremity of the paſſage they were now in, as that place in the event of any one's entering the dungeons, which was extremely improbable, would be entirely out of their track, and by concealing the feeble light he had with

with him, they might remain there in perfect darkneſs until night, as the narrow chink which admitted light and air at the oppoſite end of the paſſage, caſt along it too feeble a glimmer to enable any one to diſtinguiſh an object at ſo great a diſtance; and when night had diffuſed her ſtillneſs over the caſtle, and the ſenſes of its inhabitants were no longer open to the impreſſion of external objects, they might then by means of the private door, and the little veſſel upon the moat depart from the caſtle, and before the eſcape of Matilda was known, might have reached ſome place of ſafety and concealment.

Fraught with theſe opinions, he led his trembling companion to the extremity of the paſſage where he had determined to take up his abode for a few hours, and luckily diſcovered a receſs with a ſeat, where

they muſt be completely hid, unleſs any one came purpoſely to look for them, and now concealing the light, he at length broke the ſilence he had hitherto ſtrictly obſerved, that accorded ſo well with the gloom of the ſubterraneous regions in which they were now ſeated, and in a whiſpering tone ſaid, "Here, my dear "Matilda, we will remain until night, "when we ſhall be enabled, with a good "proſpect of ſucceſs, to effect our eſ-"cape from this manſion of depravity "and vice." His fair companion in the ſame whiſpering tone, acquieſced in his reſolution, and they ſat down in the receſs that ſo effectually concealed them.

Conrad was now relieved from his agitation, and a portion of that anxiety which had corroded his mind, and reviving in pleaſing remembrance former

mer ſcenes of tenderneſs and love, he anticipated with all the eagerneſs of a vivid imagination the delights of future happineſs. But ſcarcely had he began to be thus employed when they heard a diſtant noiſe; Conrad alarmed, and fearful of being diſcovered, liſtened with the moſt eager anxiety, until he plainly heard a footſtep advancing along one of the paſſages that led to that at the end of which they were ſeated. Fright almoſt deprived him of reflection, and the power of motion, his companion trembled violently, whilſt Conrad recollecting the danger of her ſcreaming, and thereby betraying the place of their concealment, placed his hand upon her mouth, and ſtrictly charged her to avoid making the leaſt noiſe. The footſteps now evidently advanced, and her agitation becoming extreme, and too powerful for her ſenſes, ſhe fainted in his arms: ſtill

more diſtreſſed by ſo unfortunate a circumſtance, he had no reſource but to remain where he was, and by the moſt ſcrupulous ſilence, endeavour to prevent a diſcovery.

He heard the footſteps, which ſeemed to be thoſe of a ſingle perſon, cautiouſly advancing along the paſſage, in the receſs of which they were ſeated, and could with difficulty moderate the extreme agitation of his nerves. No glimmer of any light appeared, and he ventured to peep from his concealment, but nothing could be ſeen, though he diſtinctly heard the footſteps, which at length took a direction on the oppoſite ſide of the paſſage; Conrad ſtill heard them proceed until the ſound died upon his ear, when the ſhutting of a door again awakened his fright, and renewed his perturbation, he once more heard them, though now

ſeeming

ſeeming to be thoſe of two perſons returning very ſlowly into the paſſage at the extremity of which they had placed themſelves. His tremor increaſed to an almoſt ungovernable height, when he was relieved by their taking a contrary direction from the angle where he remained: he heard them paſs through the ſhort paſſage at the end, and again the ſound became inaudible; but ſoon afterwards a door grated upon its hinges, and he diſtinctly heard ſome one in the dungeon, to the wall of which the ſtone he was ſitting upon cloſely adjoined; chains rattled for a moment, a whiſpering ſucceeded, which laſted a few moments, and all was once more ſilent as the grave.

Fright and agitation now yielded in the mind of Conrad to wonder and amazement; for he could not rationally explain

the cauſe of the ſtrange ſounds which had met his ear. Report had adjudged the place to be haunted, but the ſtrong intellects of Conrad deſpiſed the tale. Yet how could the noiſe that had juſt now filled him with terror and affright proceed from any living being? The way through the dungeons to the Eaſt Tower was only known to himſelf and Arthur de Umfreville. That Arthur ſhould walk there at that time was, in the higheſt degree, improbable,—that he ſhould be there without a light, was incredible. But the clanking of the chains and whiſpering, was concluſive evidence againſt ſuch a ſuppoſition. It muſt be a ſupernatural being—it muſt be an apparition that haunted the dungeons! And the latter concluſion appeared ſo extremely juſt, reaſoning from the evidence of what he had heard, that, incredulous as he was, he found himſelf compelled to aſſent to its truth.

His

His mind had been ſo wholly abſorbed by the incidents the occurrence of which had created ſo much alarm, that he had forgotten the ſtate in which his fair companion ſtill remained, reclining upon his boſom. Gently raiſing her head, and placing his hand upon her mouth to prevent any unguarded exclamation, he enjoyed the inexpreſſible ſatisfaction of witneſſing her recovery. When, ſoftly whiſpering in her ear to be ſilent, they ſat for ſome time without interchanging a word. Terrified as he had been by the noiſe, and though half convinced it muſt have ariſen from a ſupernatural being; yet hearing the whiſpering in the adjoining dungeon, and not certainly knowing whether any one was there, he was afraid to ſpeak; and waited with the greateſt anxiety for the time, which was ſtill far diſtant, when he might ſafely quit a ſituation now become extremely irkſome and unpleaſant.

A conſiderable buſtle above, added to the clangor of arms, now attracted their notice, and excited ſome fear. After a ſhort interval, a noiſe was again heard below; and Conrad liſtening with the moſt anxious attention, plainly heard ſome one advancing towards the paſſage; and to increaſe his alarm, the footſteps proceeded along the paſſage leading from the Eaſt Tower. The fear of being diſcovered now more forcibly impreſſed itſelf upon his mind, and the agitation of his fair companion was renewed with redoubled force; with difficulty Conrad prevented her from ſcreaming aloud, and on the nearer approach of the footſteps ſhe again became ſenſeleſs in his arms. The noiſe ceaſed for a minute, when it approached nearer; and the dazzling glare of a ſtrong light illuminated the paſſage. The footſteps ſeemed to be thoſe of two

or

or three perſons, and the terror of Conrad became extreme. It was doubtleſs the Baron, who, being made acquainted with the eſcape of Matilda, was come to ſeek her in theſe dark caverns; where, from the ſituation of the door, he would ſuppoſe her to be fled. They advanced along the paſſage, towards the place where he and his fair companion were ſeated. Horror in the thought! He unſheathed his dagger, and reſolutely determined, if their concealment was diſcovered, inſtantly to plunge it into the heart of his companion, and then transfix his own. The footſteps approached nearer, and the fatal dagger was already brandiſhed by the trembling hand of Conrad, when a pauſe enſued, and they ſlowly retreated towards the oppoſite extremity of the paſſage. A rattling of chains was now heard in the adjoining dungeon. Whilſt the light in

a great meaſure vaniſhed, they proceeded along the little paſſage at the end, and ſhortly afterwards a door was heard to unlock: an interval again enſued, and another grated upon its hinges; ſeveral were afterwards opened in the ſame manner; until at length the party entered the dungeon adjoining to the place where he ſat, when a piercing ſhriek reſounded through the vaulted caverns; and ſoon after the footſteps were plainly heard, advancing with extreme ſlowneſs in the paſſage where Conrad ſat, but no light was to be ſeen; ſtill appearing to return by the way they had arrived, the ſound became no longer heard, and a death-like ſilence ſucceeded. Aſtoniſhment was now at its utmoſt height in the mind of Conrad, who, ſtill remaining ſafe with his beloved Matilda, was convinced it was not any purſuit of her that had cauſed the

ſtrange

ſtrange noiſes he had heard. That the Baron, or any of the reſidents in the Eaſt Tower, ſhould deſcend into theſe ſubterraneous apartments without any ſpecific object in view, was extremely improbable; and he well knew that all the dungeons on the weſt-ſide of where he ſat, which appeared to have been explored by the laſt party, were uninhabited. Unable to account for theſe myſterious circumſtances, he ſeemed compelled to have recourſe to ſupernatural means, and at length concluded they aroſe from apparitions who frequented the dungeons. A concluſion, which, however ſtrange, appeared to be the only reſource left to account for the combination of ſtrange events that had juſt occurred.

His fair companion, now a little recovered, complained of much indiſpoſition. There being at length a ceſſation of noiſe,

they partook of the proviſions he had brought with him as comfortably as the darkneſs of the place would permit, for he was afraid to diſplay his light, and ſhe in ſome meaſure regained her ſpirits. All was now ſilent, not the leaſt ſound was to be heard; and Conrad had leiſure to reflect upon the courſe to be purſued, after he had led Matilda out of the Caſtle. The ruinous building, where he had found the portrait ſo much reſembling himſelf, darted into his mind; it was very probably the place where he ſhould meet with the means of elucidating the myſtery he ardently wiſhed to develope, and to that he determined to haſten. But it was at leaſt two days journey from the Caſtle of Umfreville, and a purſuit would no doubt be commenced in the morning, which they might find a difficulty in eſcaping from; at the ſame time he reflected, the Baron would

would be conſiderably embarraſſed, as he could not purſue them without aſſiſtance, and all his villainy relative to Matilda muſt then be diſcovered. In the male habiliments he had brought with him, her eſcape could better be effected than in her own dreſs; and he determined they ſhould travel the greater part of the night, and towards morning, ſtriking off into by-paths, endeavour to obtain concealment in an unfrequented place, or lodging and refreſhment in ſome cottage, where they might paſs for pilgrims.

Afraid for ſome time of uttering a word, he at length whiſpered his plan, which was highly approved of; and, with the utmoſt impatience, he waited till the hour when darkneſs and ſilence might allow of their eſcape undiſcovered. A clangor of arms was now heard without, which excited ſome fearful attention, but this

this ſoon ceaſed, and ſilence again prevailed. At length the long expected night arrived, and Conrad, though the darkneſs was unpleaſant, joyfully obſerved the extinction of his light when he took his lanthorn from its concealment; whilſt his fair companion, having cloathed herſelf in the apparel he had brought for that purpoſe, they proceeded through the paſſages until they arrived at the outer door; which being unlocked by Conrad, and likewiſe the private door, they found themſelves without the Caſtle, and at the ſide of the moat: but, alas! the little veſſel was not to be ſeen! Alarmed at the circumſtance, the affrighted Conrad, and his ſtill more terrified companion, made the complete circuit of the Caſtle, but no boat was to be diſcovered. At length, looking at the draw-bridge, they found it unaccountably not drawn up; this

this afforded them the beſt means of eſcape, and with eager ſtep they paſſed over to the other ſide. The night was dark, and inclined to be tempeſtuous, and after travelling ſome time with a conſiderable degree of trepidation, which did not allow them to interchange converſation, the ſtorm howled around them, and Conrad, anxious to ſhield his beloved Matilda from its "pitileſs pelting", anxiouſly looked around for ſome place where they might meet with ſafety and ſhelter. A ſmall building was perceived at a ſhort diſtance, which had formerly been uſed as a ſort of watch tower, but was now, from the greater extent of the domains of Umfreville, become in a great meaſure uſeleſs, and was ſuffered to moulder into ruins. To this they cautiouſly approached, and finding it uninhabited, gladly entered, where they at leaſt found ſhelter, which,

from

from the increaſing violence of the tempeſt, had become an event devoutly to be wiſhed.

Groping about for ſome time they at length found a ſeat, where they impatiently waited the abatement of the ſtorm. Conrad was now a little more at eaſe, and in tender language poured forth the ſentiments of his ſoul. His fair companion anſwered only in whiſpers, afraid of their being overheard and diſcovered. It ſtill rained, but the height of the ſtorm was conſiderably diminiſhed, and they determined to recommence their journey. They travelled with no farther interruption until the day began to dawn, when his companion, being exhauſted by fatigue, Conrad determined to lead her to a cottage which ſtood in view, and requeſt ſome refreſhment. Arrived at the hovel, the inhabitants of which had juſt

ariſen

ariſen, he informed them that he and his companion were travellers who had loſt their way the preceding night, and not being able to meet with any houſe where they could obtain admiſſion, they had wandered about until now, and being quite fatigued and exhauſted, requeſted the means of ſatisfying hunger, and reſt. The good people of the cottage readily believed the tale; and inviting them to enter, ſpread out for the uſe of their viſitors what their poverty afforded; but his companion declined the refreſhment of food, and pleading extreme debility and fatigue, deſired the conveniences of repoſe. This was immediately acceded to, and ſhe retired to enjoy that ſleep which unuſual exertion had rendered highly neceſſary. Conrad, after heartily partaking of what was ſet before him, politely refuſed their offer of a bed, and took a nap where he was ſeated. Soon after he awoke, he was informed by the

the miſtreſs of the cottage, that his companion, who was above, requeſted to ſpeak with him alone.

There ſeemed ſomething myſterious in the demand, and upon aſcending to enquire what his beloved Matilda wiſhed to ſay, a form met his eyes far different from that of Matilda; he ſtarted, and could ſcarcely believe the evidence of his ſenſes; but his ſight bore witneſs of its truth, and ſoon his ear confirmed the ſenſation, when he heard the voice of the female before him, who immediately, upon his entering, ſaid to him, with rather an embarraſſed air, "An attempt "to deceive you any longer muſt have "been vain, and therefore I thought the "moſt proper line of conduct would be "marked by at once ſending for you, "that you may diſcover the error with-"out any riſk of our being betrayed by "the

" the preſence of others; it is evident to " your ſight I am not the perſon whoſe " eſcape you intended to effect, nor do " I know whom your attempt was meant " to reſcue, but, anxious myſelf to fly " from a hateful and deteſted priſon, " I eagerly ſeized the opportunity, and, " whilſt I am ſorry for your diſappoint- " ment, I congratulate myſelf upon my " happy deliverance, for which, with gra- " titude, I ſhall ever conſider myſelf as " your debtor." Marianne, for that was her name, poſſeſſed a graceful perſon, and a conſiderable ſhare of beauty, but tinctured with a voluptuouſneſs which diſplayed an abſence of that chaſte refinement attendant upon virtue. She was accompliſhed in every art that could add poignancy to pleaſure, and now darted a look at her deliverer, which, had his mind been diſengaged, might, perhaps, have

have made a conſiderable inroad in his inclinations. But diſappointment and rage had taken entire poſſeſſion of him; and her charms failed of their effect; ſhe appeared a demon to his eyes, and ſcarcely could the conſideration of her ſex prevent him from laying violent hands upon the perſon who had ſo cruelly deceived him. But a little reflection coming to his aid, and, unable to account for ſo myſterious an incident, whilſt he eagerly wiſhed to gain information concerning Matilda, he ſtifled his anger, and ſaid to his companion, "By what means did you acquire "a knowlege of my plan;" Marianne replied, "I picked up a note in the paſ- "ſage to our dining-room in which it "was developed, and having long wiſhed "to eſcape from the odious confinement "in which I was immured, I eagerly em- "braced the opportunity that offered,

"and

" and determined to ſhare with the fa-
" voured fair one her joyful deliverance,
" as, from my knowledge of the ſcheme,
" ſhe would not have thought proper to
" deny my requeſt, whilſt the circum-
" ſtance might have been concealed from
" the reſt. I purſued the directions con-
" tained in the note, and, at the appointed
" time, deſcended to the door leading to
" the dungeons; no other female ap-
" peared, and at the moment of my arri-
" val the door opened; I was ſorry for the
" deception wherein I was about to play
" a principal part, but to have heſitated
" might have been the means of excit-
" ing alarm, and cauſing diſcoveries, in
" the event of which my life might have
" been in imminent danger, and, therefore,
" without delay, I precipitated myſelf
" into your arms; the reſt you are ac-
" quainted with; but the terror I expe-
" rienced in the dungeons was a ſufficient

" puniſh-

" puniſhment for my deceit." Anguiſh had forcibly ſeized the mind of Conrad; he raved at the diſappointment, and puſhed away, with rage and contempt, Marianne, who endeavoured, by her ſoothing arts, to conſole him; at length he reflected he was in ſome meaſure in her power, and, ſoftening his manner, ſaid, " Excuſe the rudeneſs of my ſor-
" row and diſappointment; I wiſhed to
" deliver a beloved ſiſter from the ſen-
" ſual tyranny of the Baron, and the
" failure of my attempt tortures my mind
" with inſupportable pain." The fine figure of Conrad had excited the attention of Marianne, and a number of pleaſing emotions and deſires in her boſom, but the ſuppoſition of his attempt being aimed at the reſcue of ſome female who poſſeſſed his love, had in ſome meaſure repelled them to their ſource; the

mention

mention of a beloved ſiſter ſeemed to imply that his heart was diſengaged, and immediately every ſeductive attraction was diſplayed in her manners: "I will chearfully aſſiſt you," ſaid ſhe, "in any other attempt you may wiſh to make for the purpoſe of delivering your ſiſter from her confinement, in which, as you are ſo well acquainted with all the paſſages, you will probably ſucceed;" though there was not the moſt remote intention in her mind of again viſiting the caſtle, and ſhe only made the offer for the purpoſe of detaining Conrad, and engaging his notice. The latter, however, too evidently ſaw that the diſcovery of the preſent would render any other attempt nearly hopeleſs, and the perception of this ſunk him deeper in deſpair, but wiſhing not to offend the female whom he had accidentally releaſed, knowing the danger

danger in which he ſhould be involved if ſhe betrayed the plan he had formed; for though it would equally environ her, yet ſhe might make her peace with the Baron by ſacrificing him, he forbore, therefore, from giving utterance to the rage that ſwelled in his breaſt, and calmly ſaid, "I muſt return to the caſtle, and "releaſe from captivity my beloved "ſiſter." Marianne had not the leaſt deſire to accompany him, and made many ſeductive attempts to detain the elegant youth, whoſe manly graces had captivated her heart, but ſhe was ignorant of the powerful charm that called him back, and, finding her endeavours vain, was at length forced to deſiſt, and content herſelf with requeſting him to lead his ſiſter to the cottage where they were now inmates, at which place ſhe would wait his return, and from whence they might depart together

gether in ſearch of ſome retreat where they might enjoy peace and ſecurity. To this requeſt Conrad inſtantly acceded, though with no intention of really complying with it; the forward manners of Marianne diſpleaſed him, added to which his whole ſoul was occupied by Matilda, and he wiſhed for no partner in his flight but her with whom he was united by the tendereſt ties of affection.

END OF VOL. I.

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